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RUBY ROLAND,
THE GIRL SPY:

OR,

SIMON KENTON'S PROTEGE.

BY FREDERICK WHITTAKER,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING DIME NOVELS:

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RUBY ROLAND, THE GIRL SPY

CHAPTER I.

THE RANGER'S RUSE.

A TALL, muscular young fellow, dressed in hunter garb, came silently out of the woods from the north side of the Kentucky river, about a hundred years ago, and pausing by the bole of a gigantic beech tree, scanned the opposite shore with keen, silent attention.

There was a peculiar air of resolute fearless deviltry in the face of the young hunter, coupled with the piercing, roving glances of his intensely black eyes, that showed he was no novice to the trade of hunter and scout. He was in the midst of the hunting-grounds of Shawnee and Delaware, miles away from the then infant settlement of Boonesborough; and he was all alone with his rifle and knife, to take care of himself.

The look of his face abundantly evinced that he felt quite equal to the task, and only the acquired caution of his craft kept him from wading boldly into the river at once.

But as it was, he had learned the lesson of the successful Indian-slayer by hard experience. Therefore, now, it was with a long, deep scrutiny that he scanned the opposite banks, across the first open piece of landscape he had come on in a day's travel. On the opposite bank all was still as death, save for the occasional note of a bird. It was late in May and the forest was all blinded with its canopy of leaves, while game was distant and hiding in the coverts.

As the young hunter looked, a black squirrel, shyest of all its kind, ran out on a limb of a tree on the other side of

the river, and stood, whisking its tail and chattering, before his eyes, above the stream.

"Wal," muttered the young man, as he stepped boldly out, "thar kurn't be much to be skeered on when *you're* thar my little kuss. Go ahead, Simon."

Without further ado he descended the bank, deep, brown and bare, for some sixty feet, and then ran quickly across a bed of sand into the shallow stream.

The Kentucky river, in winter a broad and powerful stream, had dwindled under the summer heats to a rivulet not more than two hundred feet across, running over a sandy rocky bed walled in by high banks.

Into this stream waded the hunter, and soon found himself midway between the banks and up to his armpits in water. He was obliged to lift up rifle and powder-horn over his head as he waded along, and every now and then he would stop to brace himself against the current, and glance anxiously up and down either side of the river, as if anticipating the presence of enemies, ready to take him at advantage.

At last the water began to sink below his arms; and slowly he emerged from the river, strode through the shallows, and stood on the opposite shore.

"By the holy poker!" he muttered, as he climbed the further bank, "that ar's a bad scrape fur to ketch a kuss in. You'd best git to cover right smartly, Simon, ef you're the spy you used to was. *Git!*"

And, as he spoke, he hurried up the bank into the woods, and threw himself down under a tree, completely hidden from sight. With the hunter's instinct, he lay still as death, listening intently for sounds. The presence of the squirrel had assured him of the quiet of things before, or he would not have ventured where he did. But, the hunter knew too well that a very few minutes were able to change the whole current of events around him, and that the chance passing of a single Indian might render his own situation very perilous.

It was therefore with the keenest attention that he looked and listened in the woods all round, before going further.

Presently came the sweet pipe of a red-bird from a tree not far off, and the hunter muttered:

"All right on *that* side."

He knew the note, as belonging to one of the most wary of birds. Then several other birds chirped at intervals, and he heard the tiny chatter of squirrels all round him.

"Simon, you blamed ornary kuss, I reckon you kin git," said the hunter deliberately, and he rose to his feet.

Hardly had he done so, when he sunk down again as if shot, for the loud snap of a dry stick sounded plainly in the air, and it came from the further bank of the river.

"Follered, by the holy poker!" he ejaculated, in a low tone. "Now, who the Old Scratch kin that be?"

As he spoke he threw himself down behind the tree, and, bringing all his intelligence to bear on the north bank, which he had just left, awaited the advance of the stranger.

There was no more noise now. The other, whoever he was, had evidently been startled by his own carelessness. Apart from the snapping of that single stick, there was no further sign of human presence on the north bank.

The man on the south bank lay there watching silently and eagerly, but saw nothing. The usual noises of the woods kept on around him, and he could see squirrels moving on the other side of the river.

There was a small deserted space on either side of him, and a patch of the same breadth on the opposite side that showed him that the wild animals were shy of human creatures, and revealed to him the locality of his enemy.

In those two places all were still, and, as unerringly as if he had seen the strange hunter, Simon guessed that the latter had come to the identical tree by which himself had first scanned the river.

"And by the holy poker, ef that's so, the kuss kin see my trail," he grumbled, half aloud. "Simon, Simon, you orter be ashamed of yourself fur leavin' them huff-tracks in the mud, when ye mout 'a' jumped from stone to stone."

Even while he grumbled, his eyes were fixed on the great beech tree, and the heavy Kentucky rifle he carried was trained on its bole, while he watched with intense gaze for a motion of the foe he guessed to be there.

Suddenly he shifted his gaze and aim to a point on **one** side of the tree, and fired at something moving **there**.

Leaping to one side out of the smoke, he distinctly beheld the splinters of bark fly where his bullet struck, and the next moment felt the stinging whiz of a bullet, that grazed his own side, as an answering puff of white smoke came *from the other side of the tree*, followed by the sharp crack of a rifle. The bullet stung him sharply, and he dropped to the earth, catching a glimpse of the vanishing figure of a man on the other side of the river, flitting from tree to tree.

"By the holy poker, that's a right smart kuss, whoever he is," muttered Simon, ruefully, as he rubbed his side. "Who'd a' thunk he'd 'a' fooled me as quick as that, and with sich an old trick. By the holy poker, Simon, you'd better go and soak your head ef you ain't smarter than that kuss. But, I'll get even with him. Darn me ef he shall fool me ag'in like that. No, sir. Mister stranger, be you white or red, runnygade or Shawnee, I'll hev your skulp fur that ar' shot, or my name ain't Simon Kenton."

And the renowned ranger darted from tree to tree on his passage up the river, following the shadowy form of his antagonist, as he caught occasional glimpses of it, and both tending toward a spot a mile further up the stream, where a wooded island reduced the danger of crossing to a less degree.

The two enemies raced for that island, loading as they ran.

CHAPTER II.

THE ISLAND.

In ten minutes more, Kenton reached a bend of the river, in the midst of which stood the little wooded island at which he thought his foe would be likely to try to cross. At that turn he made a discovery which caused him to stop with a gratified chuckle.

He was on the inside of the curve, and the position of the island was such that he commanded the whole of the further side. No human being could cross there by daylight with-

out being seen by an observer at the center of the curve.

Besides this, he could see the further bark of the river beyond for nearly two miles, and his enemy would be obliged to make a large *detour* if he expected to cross at all. That he wished to cross, the hunter felt certain, but he had totally gone out of sight now, and the opposite shore looked as silent and deserted as when Kenton first entered the river.

"By the holy poker, I've got ye, middlin' sure," muttered the ranger, gleefully. "Ef ye try to move off, I'm arter ye, like a painter arter a young shoat. Ef ye stay thar, durn me ef I kurn't wait as long as you kin. So now."

He sheltered himself under a great spreading tree and lay there watching the opposite shore. He knew well enough that his enemy had not gone thence. The practiced senses of the hunter would have detected a moving figure, however it tried to shelter itself among the trees; and moreover, *the scouts of nature*, the free wild creatures of the forest, served by their actions to indicate the whereabouts of each foe to the other, well used as both were to reading the open book of nature.

From various indications, Kenton came to the conclusion that his enemy was lying down behind the gnarled roots of a huge old oak at the edge of the bank opposite the end of the island; and Kenton was right.

There behind that tree lay his wily foe, watching the very tree at which Simon was posted. As far as woodcraft went, it was diamond cut diamond with the two.

Presently Simon chuckled to himself, as a thought struck him.

"Now ef that ar's a Shawnee hunter, mebbe I kin fool him yit. He don't know who the Old Scratch I am, and ef I give a Shawnee signal mebbe he'll show."

The hunter rose to his feet behind the tree, and shouted the Shawnee war-cry with the full force of his lungs.

It was instantly answered from the other side of the river by the peculiar whoop of the Miamis.

In the same instant Simon stuck his cap on the end of his rifle and protruded it from behind his tree.

Hardly had he done so when a bullet whizzed through the cap, with an accuracy of aim that surprised even him.

The ranger stepped from behind the tree, and leveled his rifle at the white puff of smoke on the other side of the river. He saw the form of a man vanish as he fired, and was greeted with a derisive whoop of scorn.

Kenton sunk back to his old position to reload, muttering: "By the holy poker, mister, thur bean't no discount on you fur a warrior. Kurn't fool that kuss. He must 'a' seen the cap. That skulp's wuth hav'in'. Reckon it must be old Blackfish or Otter Lifter hisself. No common brave c'u'd be as smart as that."

It certainly seemed as if matters were at a dead lock. Two shots had been fired by Simon Kenton, the best marksman of the border, after Boone, and each had brought nothing but a return as close as his own.

Reckless as the nature of the ranger was, he began to think that he couldn't afford to try any more risks with such a foe. The chances were too evenly balanced. He threw himself down in a place whence he could command a good view of the north bank, and determined to wait. He was well aware that night would surely bring things to a crisis and end the suspense. For darkness he determined to wait, resolved not to give his foe another chance.

For at least an hour all was profoundly still, and not a motion on either bank betrayed the presence of the two wily antagonists. Then Simon Kenton started violently and muttered to himself:

"By the holy poker, what's that?"

There was a distinct rustling of trees and bushes on the little island in the river.

"Is that kuss the devi. himself?" queried Simon, wonderingly. "How in the Old Scratch did he get *thar*?"

The sound of rustling increased on the island, and at last the ranger saw a bush move.

Crack went his rifle on the instant.

It was blended with a report from the opposite side of the river, and Kenton saw the white smoke curl up from the very place whence his foe had not stirred.

But where went *that* bullet?

The question was answered ere asked.

Both foemen had arrived at the island, and a shower of splintered bark and twigs flew up from the midst of the bush at which both marksmen had aimed!

A loud shriek, in the unmistakable tones of *a woman*, rose from the island, and the rustling of bushes became violent, as some one fell back into cover.

Then all was still again.

Simon rubbed his eyes. For a moment he was so bewildered that he forgot to reload his rifle.

"By the holy poker, it's a gal on the island, and we must 'a' nigh shot her!" he ejaculated, aloud. "Wal, ef this don't beat cockfightin', I'm durned. So now!"

The words seemed to relieve him in some way, for the hunter-instinct returned, and he proceeded to reload his rifle.

But as he loaded, he muttered:

"Simon, Simon, go home and soak your head for a durned fool! Three shots fired, and nary hit. What would Boone say ef he knowed it. By the holy poker, I'd as soon face Old Scratch as face the cunnel arter this bout, ef I don't git that kuss's sculp. So now."

He rammed home the bullet with a vicious thump as he said this, and resumed his weary watch. The situation had become more complicated.

A woman was on that island, a white woman, or she would not have shrieked. The squaw is well-nigh as stoical in danger as her warrior husband.

On the other side the river was a merciless savage, who would not hesitate to scalp her if he got a chance. In a moment the native chivalry of the Kentuckian was up in arms, and his face assumed an expression of grim ferocity, such as few men would have cared to face, as he scanned the opposite shore, muttering, as he clenched his rifle:

"Now may I never fire a shot ag'in as long as I live, ef I let you git your claws on that gal, Mister Stranger. Sink or swim I'm a-goin' fur her jest as soon as it's dark, an' ef thar ain't some clawin 'o' wool on that there island about the time we git there, wallop me for a skunk. So now."

He remained at his post, watching his enemy's tree with a sleepless vigilance and ferocity, that told how much in earnest

he was. Hour after hour passed ; the sun sunk down to the west and fell behind the curtain of forest ; the dark shadows sloped weirdly across the tree-trunks ; the deer flitted about through the aisles of the woods, unconscious of the two statue-like figures that lay on the ground, each watching his enemy's lair like a lurking tiger ; squirrel and bird, cicada and snake, fox and rabbit, wandered about the vicinity perfectly undisturbed ; for the two men lay so still that the animals had come to the conclusion they must be dead. Then at last the twilight faded into darkness, and the river and banks became indistinct. Suddenly Kenton leaped to his feet and dashed through the cover to a narrow place opposite the island. He used no caution, for now the island sheltered him from view entirely. But, as he dashed into the water, he heard his enemy thunder along on the opposite bank, and knew that it would be a race for the island

CHAPTER III.

THE MEETING.

THE sturdy ranger uttered a fierce war-whoop, and struggled through the deep water toward the island.

At the place where he was, the stream was only some twenty feet broad, *but*, it was swimming deep and quite rapid.

On the other side it was five times as broad, but much more shallow, so that his opponent would have that advantage over him. Still, being on the arc of a circle, the distance to be traversed was much greater, and reduced the chances to evenness.

Simon Kenton leaped into the current, rifle in hand, and sunk over his head in a moment, striking out for the opposite shore with desperate energy. Twice the strong current carried him down, and twice he touched a rock and shoved against it so vigorously that he nearly reached the opposite shore. Each time, the weight of his long rifle ducked his

head and nearly strangled him, while the struggle became fiercer than ever.

At last, just as he was passing the end of the island, he caught a friendly bough and dragged himself up to shore with dripping weapons, just as he caught sight of the dark figure of his enemy about the middle of the stream in the shallows, but up to his waist in water.

Simon Kenton uttered the Shawnee war-whoop once more and tore through the brushwood to intercept his foe.

"Now, ye ornary kuss, I've got ye, by the holy poker!" he growled savagely, as he stood on the bank above, and leveled his rifle at the other.

Click! fizz! sput!

The soaked powder missed fire, and Kenton uttered a savage growl as he flung the heavy rifle with all his force at his opponent, who was just raising his own weapon to fire back.

The ranger's rifle hit the other as it went off, with such violence, that the man in the water staggered, slipped in the current, and fell back splashing and going under.

"Now we're even, darn your painted hide!" yelled the irate Kenton, as he made one tremendous bound off the high bank into the water, drawing his knife as he leaped.

In another moment two strong men were grappling in water nearly up to their armpits, each having a knife in his right hand, and grasping his antagonist's wrist with his left.

They tripped and stumbled, wrestled and struggled in grim silence, both being equally matched in strength and agility, and fighting with the deadliest ferocity. Twice they went under water, and stumbled up without relaxing their gripe, and still neither had gained the least advantage.

At last, almost at the same moment, Kenton and his foe wrenched away from each other to regain breath, and stood panting and glaring at each other for several seconds at about six feet apart.

The Kentuckian was the first to speak.

"You're a tough cuss, stranger, I don't deny it; but you and me's got to settle this hyar business afore we go home, and by the holy poker, you kurn't sculp *that* gal, ef you're Blackfish hisself. So now."

The stranger had been entirely silent so far in the struggle. As Kenton finished, he put out one hand and said :

" *Simon, is that you ? Well, this is a good story.*"

The voice of the stranger was deep and powerful ; he spoke better English than Kenton, and the latter seemed to recognize the tones in a moment.

The ranger sprung back in the water, with a cry of wonder, and shouted out :

" Gee-Christopher-cricket-and-blue-blazes ! Wal, ef we arn't be'n a couple of durndest jack-mules this side of ole Virginny. By the holy poker, *it's Cunnel Boone !*"

Daniel Boone himself indulged in a short laugh, instantly checked, as he quietly said :

" And I took you for a Shawnee scout, Kenton, and thought yon wanted to scalp the girl on the island. Well, well."

Not another word passed between the two famous hunters, so strangely met, for some time. They returned their knives in silence, groped about in the water with their moccasined feet, and discovered their rifles, with which they slowly landed on the island, both buried in curious cogitations.

They ascended the bank together and entered the thick covert of bushes before either of them spoke, and then Kenton, in a sort of sheepish tone, said :

" ' I won't do to tell this story too permiskus, cunnel, I reckon. I'm clean ashamed o' myself fur not pluggin' ye, when ye give me such a chance. I war a-sayin' to myself, what would cunnel say ef he knowed I'd made sich a show o' myself to a Injun varmint, leave alone a white man, and *sich* a white man as you, cunnel."

Boone again uttered one of his low laughs.

" To tell you the truth, Simon, I was thinking that *I* was the man to feel ashamed. You never saw *me*, and you put two holes into my old cap, for all that. I *saw* you, and missed you. Simon, I thank God for my erring hand."

There was a short silence, both hunters being busily employed in drawing the charges from their wet rifles, and wiping the same. Then Kenton spoke, with a curious mingling of pride and regret in his voice, hesitating in a manner not usual with the reckless borderer.

"Then ye don't think I did so bad arter all, cunnel. I swow I feel amazin' glad I didn't hit yer, but still—ye don't think I acted like a greeny—eh, cunnel?"

"You did what no other woodman in Kentucky could do, Simon. You fooled Daniel Boone," said the elder hunter, in a grave tone. "I didn't believe it lay in ye, and I don't want to meet ye again in such a fashion. But one thing we forget. There's a white woman on this island, and we have to find her; and, besides that, we haven't a dry thread till we light a fire. Take one side the island, and I'll take the other, and hunt till we find her."

The young ranger raised his hand to his cap in a military salute, as he turned away.

"All right, cunnel. We'll git her."

The two hunters moved off on either side of the island in a circuit, which speedily brought them face to face at the upper end, for there was not more than an acre of ground embraced in its limits.

Neither of them had come across any traces of a human being.

Again they turned and searched in the opposite direction, moving cautiously and stopping frequently to listen for the rustle of bushes. At last it became plain that the former occupant of the island, whoever it might be, had decamped in some manner, probably during the noise and confusion of their struggle in the river. At all events, she was not to be found, and the two hunters gave up the search in their second round.

It was altogether too dark to trail, and both concluded to wait till morning for the purpose. Meantime a fire was kindled in the midst of a dense thicket in the middle of the island, screened on all sides by brushwood, and made of dry punk gathered from a rotten fallen tree. Then, by the side of the glowing embers, the wearied hunters dried clothes and arms, cleaned their guns, and consulted on their future movements, after detailing to each other the results of their separate scouts through the Shawnee hunting-grounds, up to the time when they had so unexpectedly met on the banks of the Kentucky.

It took but a little time to exchange news, and then both

composed themselves to slumber, with their feet to the fire, and slept till the first streaks of dawn appeared in the eastern sky.

CHAPTER IV.

RUBY ROLAND.

SIMON KENTON was the first to wake in the morning. Instead of experiencing the usual feeling of chilliness which assails the camper-out in the early hours by a dying fire, he was sensible of a glowing and comfortable warmth at his feet, and his eyes opened on the leaping white flames of a pleasant fire, the brands crackling merrily, as if lately put on.

"By the holy poker, cunnel," quoth the borderer, rubbing his eyes and stretching, "you're ahead of me this hyar mornin'. Wal, let's get up and make tracks."

As he spoke, he yawned portentously, and sat up, only to fall back the next moment with a loud exclamation of:

"Who in the Old Scratch be you, anyhow?"

Boone lay fast asleep opposite, and by the fire, between them, sat a *young girl*, looking intently at Kenton.

"I am Ruby Roland," said one of the sweetest voices he had ever heard; and the girl smiled in his face, fearlessly.

Simon Kenton slowly rose up to a sitting posture and stared at the new-comer in utter amazement, just as Boone also awoke, and rolling half over, fixed his steady gaze on the girl, but without exhibiting the surprise displayed by Kenton.

The girl was a little creature of some seventeen summers, with a dark, foreign-looking face, very pretty, lighted with black eyes, and set off with black hair, arranged in two long plaits. She was attired in the costume of an Indian chief's daughter, of the richest materials in use among the Shawnees, and carried with her a bow and arrows.

First Simon drew in his feet, and sat up in a more polite position, then Daniel Boone slowly rose and sat looking at

the strange maiden ; and then a deep silence fell on all three, which was first broken by the girl who called herself Ruby Roland.

" You two are Simon Kenton and Colonel Boone, are you not ?" she asked, in her musical voice, slightly accented with a French intonation.

Boone himself answered her with great respect :

" We are, Miss. I am Colonel Daniel Boone, and this is Captain Simon Kenton."

The Kentucky borderers were always remarkably tenacious of their military titles, and very proud of them. In reality they represented deeds requiring courage and conduct of a kind such as few regular soldiers could have boasted of.

Ruby Roland smiled graciously on the two Kentuckians.

" I suppose, then, you will not be afraid to run into danger on my account, will you ? I warn you that a deadly peril is round us all three, which you can only escape by leaving me to face it alone. Will you do that ?"

" Simon Kenton will not, madam ; I will answer for that," said the quiet voice of Boone.

" And Cunnel Boone 'll let the red varmints chaw him up ter fiddle-strings, afore he deserts a lady. I'll go a house and farm on that. So now," was Kenton's characteristic reply.

Ruby smiled at them both as she said :

" I knew I was not wrong. You have heard of Tabac, the Grand Door of the Wabash. I am his daughter."

Kenton looked more and more astonished. He scratched his head in a dubious manner, and observed :

" Then, by the holy poker, Miss, all I kin say is that the Grand Door opens into a very pretty place ; but—"

Ruby smiled as he hesitated.

" But you wonder how I come to talk English so well, an how I come here ; is it not so ?"

" Wal, Miss, I ain't denyin' that same," said Kenton, frankly.

" I will tell you, then. The Grand Door is not my own father. No, alas ! he died when I was a baby. But, I have been adopted by the chief since then, and my mother reigned over all the tribes of the Wabash till her death, last year. It was only six weeks ago when I escaped from the Indian town

by St. Vincents, and came here. Gentlemen, I want to see Colonel George Rogers Clark."

Both the scouts uttered an involuntary exclamation of wonder, the first that had escaped the lips of Boone.

"Colonel Clark is at Harrodsburg, Miss," said the elder hunter, gravely; "and we shall find it difficult to penetrate there, for Blackfish, the Shawnee chief, is round it with his and."

Ruby Roland smiled with some little appearance of scorn.

"My father was a French officer, and I am the adopted child of the first war-chief of the West," she said. "I suppose you think you could get into Harrodsburg, do you not?"

"I suppose so," Miss, said Boone, quietly.

"Very well; then I will go with you," said this little fragile-looking girl, with equal calmness. "You are both good warriors and scouts, and yet I fooled you both last night."

"What! was it you, then, as was on this hyar island?" asked Kenton, in amazement. "Why, whar in the Old Scratch did ye hide, Miss, ef it ain't axin' too much?"

Ruby laughed, and pointed to a great tree that overhung the camp-fire itself.

"Up there in a hollow, and heard every word you said. Had you been Shawnees, as you made me think by your whoops, both would have been dead long ere this. I made up this fire half an hour ago, and neither of you waked."

Boone and Kenton looked at each other in silence for several minutes. The practiced woodmen had been outwitted by this quiet, modest little girl, and both instinctively felt that she was no common personage.

Daniel Boone rose to his feet and shook himself, then looked to the priming of his rifle and examined his weapons before he spoke. At last he said:

"I am at your orders, Miss. What do you wish us to do?"

"I am very hungry," said the girl, simply. "I want something to eat first. The Shawnees are on my trail, and I must get to Harrodsburg in some way. I have no rifle, and I am too weak to shoot well with the bow. I want you to take me to see Colonel Clark."

Boone made a sign to Kenton, and the latter disappeared

among the bushes on the shallow side of the river. As soon as he was gone, the veteran hunter asked :

"How do you know the Shawnees are on your trail, Miss?"

"I saw them, only yesterday morning," she answered. "I threw them out by floating down the river on a log, and they are by this time ranging up and down the river to find me."

Boone frowned thoughtfully and remained silent for some minutes, when he asked :

"How far off did you leave them, do you think?"

"About thirty-five miles up the stream," was the quiet reply.

The old hunter looked with grave admiration at the girl.

"You are a brave girl!" he said. "I have known warriors not half as brave and skillful. Simon and I did not find a single sign all of yesterday, and we were on different tracks too. Do you think they will follow you close?"

"I *know* it," said Ruby, quietly. "They will follow me to kill me, till I am safe in Harrodsburg!"

Another man might have asked "why." Boone had no idle curiosity; he judged unerringly that the girl was telling the truth, and wished for no reasons. She gave them herself a moment later.

"They know my errand to Colonel Clark, and Governor Hamilton has sent them after me," she said, meaningly.

Then Boone knew all. The great chief of the Wabash tribes had doubtless sent his daughter to open negotiations with the Americans, and the English Governor at Detroit had got wind of it in some manner, and was resolved to intercept the fair messenger; for the Revolutionary War was at its height, and the British were reckless in subsidizing savages.

As he thought over the atrocious scheme, the old hunter's lips compressed themselves into an iron line, and he growled :

"If the dogs cross *my* path to Harrodsburg, they must look to themselves. You shall go there safe, Miss."

The report of a rifle a short way off, was followed by the cheery shout of Kenton, "A fat luck, and no Injun sign yet."

CHAPTER V.

THE JOURNEY.

HALF an hour after, three persons rose from a full meal of broiled venison, comforted and refreshed, and little Ruby Roland asked :

“ Now, gentlemen, which way ? ”

“ Straight across that thar stream,” said Kenton, pointing to the deep but narrow channel which separated them from the south bank. “ I’ve been lookin’ fur a place to cross dry-shod, and thur ain’t but two ways : uther to swim, or to make a ring-tailed squealer of a jump, which we mout do, but the lady kurn’t.”

“ I will show you a better way than that,” said Ruby smiling, “ if you will follow me.”

She led them to the south side of the island, where the swift current had undermined the bank, till it overhung considerably. At this point the stream was not over twenty feet wide, and a clump of young chestnut trees overhanging the water, almost met with their foliage the boughs of a water-elm on the other bank.

The girl threw her bow and quiver to her back, swung herself up one of the young trees like a monkey, and immediately her weight caused it to bend down and touch the boughs of the elm-tree.

Light as a mountain-cat, she walked along the swaying perch, caught hold of a long, slender bough of the elm, and swung safely on her feet on the south bank of the river.

“ Well done, by the holy poker ! ” said Kenton, admiringly. “ Ef I’d ’a’ thunk of that last night, whar would you ha’ be’n, cunnel ? No miss fire, then.”

And the reckless borderer crossed the stream, followed by his companion, both laughing at the recollection of the ludicrous mistake of the night before.

Arrived on the other side, both became grave and professional at once ; and the girl Ruby, who had hitherto taken

the lead, remained subject to the further direction of her protectors.

"Now, Simon," said the elder scout, "there are no sign about here yet, but that doesn't say there won't be before long. We've a good day's tramp to Harrodsburg, and, tew chances to one, the Shawnees will take a short cut and lie in wait for us at the town, leaving a small party to follow the lady's trail. It's a chance if they hit upon ours. So you take the right hand, I'll take the left, and Miss, here, shall have the middle. Forward."

Without another word the three set out on their perilous tramp through the silent woods, at a long distance from each other, stealing like shadows among the trees, and glancing from side to side as they went, suspicious of every rustling leaf.

Boone was at least a hundred yards to the left and in front, very rarely visible at all, but all eyes and ears in the direction he was guarding, the quarter from which he himself thought the danger most imminent.

Simon Kenton was at an equal distance from Ruby on the other side, and never allowed a glimpse of himself, the only announcement of his presence being the occasional whistle of a robin from the leafy covert.

Little Ruby, in the center, held her own course fearlessly, flitting from tree to tree, and always peering ahead from behind every trunk, to see that the coast was clear, before flitting to another. As noiseless as a startled bird, she passed through the dense forest toward Harrodsburg, without a sounding footfall, and many a time her two companions would have thought she had disappeared, but for the answering signals which she sent back to Kenton, whenever he was doubtful.

Instead of finding the little girl an incumbrance, both hunters were compelled to admit that her Indian education had made her a more skillful hider than they.

Thus the three companions pressed through the silent forest in a south-westerly direction, cutting across the bend of the stream which separated them from Harrodsburg. They had only about twenty five miles to go in a direct line, but in the woods, and among wily foes like the red-men, such a dis-

tance took double the time to traverse that it would on a high-road in a quiet country. Every half-hour they called a halt, while the two scouts went on a circuit on either hand, to look for sign of enemies in pursuit.

For a long time nothing was found. The sun climbed up overhead, and darted his flaming arrows through the leaves, the birds ceased to sing, and only the sleepy whirr of the cicada recurred at intervals to make the silence deeper. Far away in the woods they could hear the occasional mournful *boom boom* of the wood dove, but the squirrels and deer were all silent and hidden away.

At noon Boone uttered the cry of the wood dove three times in succession, as a signal to close, and the three friends met together under a great tree.

"The enemy have passed ahead toward Harrodsburg," said the hunter, in a low tone. "I have just come on a trail not more than three hours old, off to the left. They have twenty warriors with them, and have gone to join Blackfish and his band at Harrodsburg."

"What do you propose doing, then?" asked little Ruby, quietly.

Boone looked at her several minutes before answering.

"You tell me these men are after you, Miss. Well, nothing is surer than that we can't get into the fort by daylight. We are only seven miles from Harrodsburg now, and if we run too fast, we shall only fall into a well-prepared ambush."

"Shall we wait here, then?" she asked, glancing round her with a quick catch of her breath.

"Not by a jugfull," said bluff Kenton, interrupting. "See nyar, cunnel, ef you've come acrost a trail ahead, I've found *nuthin*. Them ornery cusses is *arter us*; and ef we wait hyar, we'll hev to fight afore we're two hours older. So now.

Boone looked keenly at his friend.

"How do you know, Simon?" he asked.

"I heern 'em," said Kenton, laconically.

"Heard what?—shots, yells? I heard nothing."

And the great hunter looked doubtfully at Kenton, for he had never yet met his own match for keenness of senses.

Kenton held up his hand for them to listen. A moment after the faint crack of a rifle echoed far away in the rear.

CHAPTER VI.

DANGER ALL ROUND.

BOONE looked grave, Ruby turned a shade paler, and Ken on smiled grimly.

"Ye see, cunnel," said the scout, "I've b'en suspicioning dem cusses mout be arter us all the while, and I've b'en kinder on the watch to the rear. Thar's a party of the mps arter the little gal, and they've got good trackers. Guess they've b'en huntin' up and down stream arter her trail, and got to the island at last. Ef they have, they know the hull thrag now, and they're comin' arter us hellaty-clip. 'Tain't so middlin' difficult to pick up our trail, ye know, and what with them behind, and them in front, we'll hev a right smart chance of trouble to flax 'em all, and git into the fort to-night."

"That shot was not three miles off," said Ruby, suddenly. "What do you think it was, Mr. Kenton?"

"That? Oh, that was a signal from the cuss as found our trail," said Kenton, carelessly. "It's middlin' likely thur spread out all over the woods huntin' your trail, Miss; and that shot ll call 'em in."

"I thought so" said the girl, quietly. "Well, then, gentlemen, why shouldn't we cross the trail of the party ahead, make a circuit, and come into the town on the other side? They won't watch that so closely."

Boone, who had been leaning thoughtfully on his rifle all this time, now raised his head.

"Little gal," he said, gravely, "it's our only chance. But are you able to take the tramp? 'Twill be a tough one."

"I am a chief's daughter," said the girl, proudly. "Try me, and see."

Kenton was about to speak, when Boone checked him with a wave of his hand.

"Left wheel," he said, in military fashion, "and follow your leader."

As he spoke he threw his rifle to his shoulder, and started off at a slow trot of some seven miles an hour into the depths of the woods, followed, without a word, by the others at long intervals. Kenton remained behind to bring up the rear, and away they went into the woods. In a few minutes they crossed the trail of which Boone had spoken, and Kenton stopped to examine it carefully. As the elder hunter had said, it led straight to Harrodsburg, and they crossed it at right-angles, plunging deep into the woods toward the south, where, at least, they were certain the country was comparatively free of enemies.

For at least half an hour they continued their course to the south, and then Boone turned again, sharp to the west, and proceeded in the direction of Harrodsburg without more ado. Kenton remained at least a quarter of a mile nearer the march of their suspected foes, and chuckled with satisfaction as he came across several bear and deer-tracks.

The tracks were recent and very regular, unanswerable evidence to the keen hunter that the animals had been undisturbed that morning.

When Boone turned, Ruby and Kenton turned likewise, so that the former Indian file became, once more, a skirmish-line of three people, stretching over a space a quarter of a mile wide.

Again they glided cautiously but swiftly along, on the way to Harrodsburg, the post of honor, nearest the foe, belonging to Kenton.

The sun was long past the meridian, and sunk rapidly as they pressed along, till at last his level rays pierced through the covert of the forest, and announced that the king of day was about to take his departure.

By that time they judged that they must be nearly abreast of Harrodsburg, but, so still was the forest, that they could not tell its position with any certainty.

This very stillness, however, supplied them with one piece of information which they needed.

It told them they were nearing their enemies.

The birds had ceased to sing, and not a living creature of the usual denizens of the forest made its appearance on their right flank.

They knew that the Indians must be there.

Just as the sun set, they heard the reports of several rifles, a little way off on their right front, and Kenton, immediately after, sheered off to the left, and came near to Ruby and Boone.

The three, as if by a common impulse, turned their course once more to the south, and had the satisfaction of hearing a brisk fire of rifles beginning, which revealed to them the only thing they wanted to know, the position of the fort of Harrodsburg.

As they went on and the shots became more distant, Kenton and Boone closed in on Ruby, so that all three were within whispering distance, and Kenton panted out :

"Thur havin' a little muss thar, cunnel. Bully for us!"

Boone made no answer, but kept on his course till they had left the sounds of conflict far to the rear, when he turned sharp to the north, motioning the rest to keep behind him.

Now at last the twilight began to fade.

As the twilight faded, the sounds of conflict grew less and less frequent. Only an occasional rifle-shot rung out at intervals ; but every one came closer and closer as they advanced.

At last it was dark.

Then the veteran borderer stopped and allowed his two companions to come up alongside of him, when a short whispered conversation took place.

So cautious were all of being overheard that they were obliged to put their lips to each other's ears to tell and hear, and the sharpest scout might have lain twenty feet off without hearing a sound.

"We are close to the imps," said Boone ; "and the for'gate lies right in front of us. We must keep close together now."

"Do you think they know we are around?" said Ruby.

"The Indians must," said the borderer. "The only trouble is that the people inside don't."

"Ef they'll fire a few more shots," said Kenton, "I'll be bound to go through safe."

"They won't do it," whispered Boone, in answer.

Hardly had he spoken, when, as if to give the lie to his words, the flash of a rifle came from the black woods toward the fort, not a hundred yards off.

It was immediately answered by a line of flashes some distance further on, and the crackling reports of the rifles were followed by the spiteful *plug, plug, plug*, of several bullets slapping into the ground and tree-trunks round them, in very unpleasant proximity.

"That feller war some young brave on his fust war-path, cunnel," whispered Kenton, delightedly. "Ef I don't flax him, call me a skunk."

"Now we know where the fort is, thanks to him," was the answer. "There must be a big crowd, Simon, when they let the youngsters stand picket."

"I'm goin' to fotch that feller's skulp, by the holy poker," muttered Kenton. "Ef so be he's alone thar, we kin creep through the gap."

"Be careful, Simon," replied Boone, cautiously. "Remember we're not alone, and the lady can't run like we can."

"All right, cunnel," said the borderer; and as he spoke he glided away on his belly like a snake toward the point from whence the flash had proceeded.

It needed very small indications to point out to these astute frontiersmen the position of affairs round them. As well as if he had been at the side of the Indian chief, Kenton knew that a circle of savages was lying round the fort, some near, some far, according to the cover. He felt certain that the Shawnees on Ruby's trail had arrived long before and that the Indian besiegers were watching for his arrival. Their dead silence argued that.

The warrior who had just fired was probably young, and ambitious of slaying a "Big-Knife." What he had seen to fire at was uncertain, but Kenton knew that some cunning old hand would very soon be down upon his post to scold him for his carelessness.

It was therefore with senses morbidly alive to external objects that the borderer crept noiselessly toward the foe.

He took care to feel every place with his hand before he dared to trust his weight upon it, and in this way it was

fully twenty minutes ere he had traversed the hundred yards that separated him from the Indian line.

At last he judged himself there, and then he lay quite still and listened intently.

Presently, just as he had anticipated, there was a faint rustle of dry grass on his right, as if some one were coming cautiously toward him. He turned his head sharply and caught the outline of a figure on all fours not twenty feet off, by the bole of a tree.

The figure was stationary, and presently the low hoot of an owl resounded from it. The hoot was answered from the right and left, and the borderer found that he was in the very midst of his foes.

The creeping Indian moved on a little, and a second figure rose to meet it, about ten feet in front of Kenton.

It was the figure of the imprudent youngster.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE LINE.

THE two Indians sat down side by side, and proceeded to hold a short conversation in low tones, the scout seeing every motion. The outline of one of them was that of an old chief, for Kenton could distinguish the eagle-feathers, only worn by chiefs.

This warrior seemed to be gravely lecturing his heedless companion on his folly in firing, and the young one seemed to be excusing himself, although Kenton did not fully understand their words.

The conversation did not last long, for the old chief finally stole away to the left along the line, as if on a tour of inspection, and, covered by his rustling, for he moved carelessly, the borderer crept forward.

It was evident that the old chief, astute as he was, did not suspect that his enemies were anywhere in the immediate vicinity, or he would not have made so much noise.

He was simply going "grand rounds," to keep his sentries on the alert for a possible contingency.

Simon Kenton, leaving his rifle at about four feet from his enemy, drew his knife, and prepared to spring on the young Indian, who sat looking at the fort, with his back to the Kentuckian.

Just at that moment the blood rushed to the ranger's heart with a terrible throb, for *he felt a hand laid on his extended foot!*

Most men, at such a time, would have started.

Simon lay still. He could not afford to start. He did not know who touched him, but he did know that while he kept silence there was still hope in that darkness.

Slowly and noiselessly he turned his head, and felt a thrill of relief as he distinguished the black outline of Boone's coon-skin cap. He knew that his friend had followed him, and wanted to say something.

The position was now frightfully dangerous. Within a few yards were twenty Indian warriors listening for them.

Within three feet was one more, with his back turned to them.

Could the scouts communicate without being heard?

Kenton thought not, but he lay still, trusting to Boone's sagacity. In a moment more, the hand was removed, and the form of Boone glided forward with no more apparent effort than if he had been floating in water.

He said not a word, but he raised his left hand, and laid a finger on the back of Kenton's neck at the base of the skull, then pointed to the Indian and tapped his knife.

Simon nodded his head in token of comprehension, and slowly drew up, first one knee, then the other, till he was crouching behind a tree not two feet from the Indian. Boone lay quite still, while his comrade rose.

Then Kenton, holding his great knife-blade upwards, made a single step forward, and lunged out at the back of the Indian's neck, dividing the spinal marrow with the skill of a matador.

The head of the sentry fell forward on his breast, and he slowly rolled over on his side, as if he had been dropping off to sleep. He was stone dead.

Boone, listening intently, heard nothing but the low thud of the knife as it cut through the soft bone and cartilage of the spine, and the rustle in the dry grass as the Indian rolled over.

As for Kenton, he was down on one knee the moment the blow was struck, picking up the rifle that Boone had pushed up to him, and glaring fiercely round through the darkness.

For fully a minute there was a dead silence, both rangers with their senses keenly on the alert for the slightest noise.

Then there was a rustle in the grass not far off, and the low owl-hoot again broke the stillness.

Kenton himself answered it, and all was still again.

He knew well what it all meant. The nearest Indian on the line *had heard the plunge of the knife!*

Doubtless he had suspected something, and called to his neighbor.

The answer must have reassured him, for there were no more signals for some time.

Then the ranger crept forward, and softly withdrew the knife from where it stuck in the neck of the unhappy wretch, replacing it in his own belt.

As he did so, Boone touched his foot once more, and he looked back. Both the borderer and Ruby Roland were close behind him crouching to the earth, and Boone silently pointed to the fort, as if to urge a sudden dash forward.

Kenton beckoned them forward, and whispered:

"Run! both of ye. I'll cover the rear and sculp this hyar varmint."

Boone nodded softly, and took Ruby by the hand.

From where they were, they could distinctly see the sharp outlines of the pointed palisades that surrounded the fort, for as Kenton had guessed, the line had been drawn in very close during the darkness.

The only question that remained was whether there were a second line of Indians close in or not.

If not, they were almost out of danger. If there were, there was much yet to be done.

Daniel Boone and Ruby Roland crept toward the fort, not

without some little noise, but crouching low and making the best speed they could.

The moment they started Kenton knew they were heard. He heard a quick rustle of dry grass and dead leaves, a heavy rushing through the brushwood, and a score of dark forms leaped up and dashed toward the fort, yelling furiously. He heard Boone utter the Shawnee war-whoop, to confuse his enemies, and saw him and Ruby go flying among the stumps that surrounded the fort, just as a ring of spitting red flashes lighted up the woods, followed by a rattling volley of rifles. Covered by the racket, and himself unobserved, the reckless borderer passed his knife round the head of the slain sentry and scalped him without more ado.

Then he picked up the slain man's rifle, and rushed forward into the melee, whooping louder than any of them, and so far unrecognized in the thick darkness.

But now, on a sudden, the people of the fort opened a warm fire on the Indians outside, and the bullets began to fly very unpleasantly near our three friends.

Kenton bounded forward, and beheld a confused group of dark figures close under the walls, which he recognized in a moment as Boone and Ruby surrounded by foes.

"Hooroar for ole Kaintuck!" shouted the ranger, throwing all disguise to the winds, and exerting his powerful voice to the utmost. "Go it, cunnel! Give 'em fits! Knock the daylights out of the painted imps! So now!"

As he spoke, he leveled the Indian's rifle at the thickest of the Indian group, fired, dropped it, leveled his own at a chief who was rushing at him, and shot him dead, just as Boone himself fired for the first time.

Then the two renowned Indian-fighters clubbed their heavy rifles and fought like ten men to drive off the enemy and protect little Ruby.

The girl was crouched on the ground between them, the guns of the whole party were empty, and the conflict between the two muscular borderers and the confused Indians was by no means so unequal as might seem.

Suddenly a clear, commanding voice from the fort shouted
"White men, drop, quick!"

Like lightning both scouts obeyed, and a rattling volley was fired, the bullets tearing through the Indians, and sending the whole crowd to cover in a moment.

"To the gate, quick!" shouted the same voice.

"Ay, ay, cunnel, here we come!" cried Kenton.

As he spoke he snatched up Ruby like a child, and dashed away with her, followed by Boone.

A moment later the open gate of the fort was before them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BACKWOODS LEADER.

THE morning dawned clear and bright over the fort and village of Harrodsburg; and to the eye of a novice there remained nothing to indicate that the Indian besiegers were anywhere in the vicinity. The forest was quiet, and yet full of life, the robins and blue birds came flitting round the houses, and the smaller "chippy" birds came down into the inclosure of the fort, and pecked about for scattered crumbs.

Harrodsburg was a typical village of its kind, the old frontier post fortified against Indians. Its houses were built in close rows around a square, the intervals between them protected by heavy palisades, forming a continuous line with the walls. At each angle rose a large block-house, flanking the bare curtains, and a small ditch encompassed the whole.

On the morning succeeding the daring entrance of Ruby and her two protectors to the fort, a handsome and distinguished looking man of about twenty-five, dressed in a curious but very picturesque mixture of military uniform and backwoods frock and leggins, stood in the upper story of one of the block-houses, looking out over the gate through a loophole, and talking to Ruby Roland.

This young man, whose peculiar air of intelligence and resolution marked him as a person of no common mold, was

none other than the afterward celebrated George Rogers Clark, a man who had already inspired more hope and confidence in the breasts of the people of Kentucky than any other leader had yet succeeded in doing.

Colonel Clark had just returned from the parent State of Virginia, with twelve hundred pounds of Continental money, a colonel's commission, public orders "to defend Kentucky," and private orders to—ah! *that* no one knew, though man would have given much to satisfy their curiosity. He had issued a call to the settlers of Kentucky to organize for a secret expedition, and companies had been formed at different points all along the frontiers of the present States of Pennsylvania, Virginia and Ohio.

And now, when his plans were almost ripe, the ardent young leader was caught and caged in Harrodsburg, by a miserable Shawnee chief named Blackfish, and less than three hundred warriors. Such are the accidents that conspire against the most successful military chiefs.

Colonel Clark was looking thoughtfully out of the loophole, but listening to the words of his fair companion with great attention, nevertheless. There were no eavesdroppers near, and the girl appeared to be talking very earnestly.

"If you will come, colonel," she said in conclusion, "I can promise that you shall be welcomed by all the tribes of forest and prairie that obey my father. You will only have to contend with the British, for our people are already tired of the yoke, and long to throw it off."

Colonel Clark remained silently looking out of the loophole, as if he had not heard what she said. He seemed to be absorbed in watching the maneuvers of a herd of cattle that had been driven out of the fort-gate as soon as daylight advanced, and when the besiegers had retired to a respectful distance.

This was done every day, and, curiously enough, the Indians seldom or never molested the herdsmen, as long as they kept within the clearing surrounding the fort.

Without answering Ruby, the young colonel pointed to the cattle, and said:

"There are Indians in the high grass behind those cows. See how they act."

Ruby frowned a little impatiently, and answered:

"We are not talking of that, colonel. I brought you a certain proposition from Tabac, the Grand Sachem and Grand Door of the Wabash. Have you any answer for it?"

Clark smiled provokingly. He was a man of great penetration and tact, as the reader will discover in the course of this book, and for some reason he did not see fit to give the girl a full answer at the moment.

"You see that field," he said, pointing; "now, Mademoiselle Roland, if you wait here half an hour I'll show you some of the tallest kind of fun that you ever saw. And after that, I'll be ready to talk business to you."

So saying, he vanished from the block-house, with very scant ceremony for the lady it contained, leaving her overwhelmed with surprise and mortification, not unmixed with great anger at herself.

Ruby Roland, left to herself, clenched her little hands and stamped her foot angrily, saying:

"Why did I come here through all these dangers to meet this handsome, insolent American, who laughs at me? Does he think I am some common squaw, that he leaves me thus? Now, by heavens, if he does not treat me better at our next interview, he shall find that Ruby Roland can go out as she came in, and woe betide all here if she does, and his handsome, insolent face worst of all. Oh, I could strike him dead!"

From all which tirade, it became evident that Miss Ruby was very much piqued at Colonel Clark's neglect, while, at the same time, much struck with his personal appearance. Whatever her proposition might have been, she was not destined to obtain an answer to it that morning, for events speedily took place which interested her in spite of herself.

Looking down toward the gate, she saw reckless Simon Kenton standing by its open leaves, with two or three other men, and saw Colonel Clark approach and give the scout some orders. Simon nodded, sauntered out of the gate, with Boone and five or six hunters, and strolled carelessly toward the field in front of the gate where the cows were feeding, and where the animals appeared to be very uneasy—a sure sign of Indians being near them.

Ruby, watching the length of the palisades, soon after saw

the colonel himself, with a long file of men, emerge from behind the block-house at the further angle of the fort, and steal off into the woods, in the very direction from which she had come the night before.

Interested in spite of herself, she watched and listened for signs of the enemy. All was quiet, and it seemed as if the besiegers must have retired from the place but for the behavior of the cattle.

She saw Simon and the hunters stop short in a turnip patch which had been cleared close under the fire of the fort, and begin to thin the vegetables, as if at their ordinary work.

Every now and then one of the men in the field would shout out some witticism to those in the fort about the Indians having run away, and all this time the lurking savages gave no token of their whereabouts.

All of a sudden, a loud yell was raised from the woods, in rear of the field where the cattle were feeding, followed by a rattling volley of rifles; and the next moment Clark and his Kentuckians darted out of the cover, routing out some fifty Indians, who leaped up and stood bewildered.

At the same moment Kenton and the men in the turnip patch raised a yell of triumph, and poured a second volley into the now demoralized savages, charging in at the instant of firing.

The Shawnees made a feeble, scattering return, and then fled in great haste, the borderers rushing out after them in hot pursuit—the sound of yells and shots dying away in the distance.

At least an hour elapsed before they returned, and then Ruby was at the gate to meet them. She was anxious to know what had happened. The first person she saw was Colonel Clark, who came up at the head of his men, smiling, as if greatly pleased.

He came straight to Ruby, and addressed her before all the people:

“Mademoiselle Roland, Blackfish decamped last night, as soon as he heard you had got in. We have driven away this little body of spies, and Harrodsburg is safe. Mademoiselle, *I accept your proposition.*”

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECRET EXPEDITION.

THE day was hot and sultry, in early summer, about a year afterward, on the broad, shallow stream of the Kanawha River as a flotilla of large flat-boats, known to the voyageurs as *bateaux*, was steadily following its way down the stream, assisted by the current, and urged by four or six long sweeps in each boat, pulled by two or three men apiece.

The bateaux were long, broad flat-boats, square at each end, hastily constructed from green plank, on the borders of the river, like nothing but great scows. There were seven of these rude but effective craft, all full of armed men, and holding about two hundred and fifty souls, all told.

Among these was a very small sprinkling of women and children; but the far greater proportion were stout, bronzed backwoodsmen, apt at a light, and unerring in aim.

The leading boat of the flotilla was distinguished by a little house, or cabin, built in its center, on the summit of which rose a flag-staff, from which drooped a small white flag, bearing the pine-tree and coiled rattle-snake of the infant nation, which had not as yet been replaced by the memorable Stars and Stripes.

By this flag-staff, glass in hand, stood the leader of the expedition, Colonel George Rogers Clark, and by him a lad of about fifteen, slender in figure, of very dark complexion, who wore the same half-military dress as his leader—the hunting shirt and leggings being fringed with gold lace, and the fur cap faced with a gilt plate of military device. Both wore swords and pistols, with officers' scarlet sashes around the loins, to indicate authority.

"We shall get to the Ohio in an hour hence, colonel, if we keep up this speed," remarked the boy officer, as Clark put down the glass with which he had been scanning the river ahead.

"I think so," said Clark, gravely. "We shall get news

there, at all events, Mr. Frank. Have you the morning report yet, sir?"

"Yes, colonel," replied young Frank, promptly; "there are but three sick in the command, and one of them is a woman."

Clark frowned, and made an impatient movement.

"These women are always in the way," he said. "One would think that an expedition of this sort would put them out of conceit to come; but there's no stopping the willful hussies—and they're sure to fall sick just when we don't want them. I wish they'd stay where they belong."

The boy officer—he was Clark's adjutant—laughed, as he said:

"Well, colonel, you know it's no use fighting them. They will have their own way, as you say. This one I speak of isn't rightly sick, but she met with an accident, yesterday, in passing the rapids. To save her husband, who was tired out, she took his place at the oar, with two of Captain Helm's men, and when the oar struck a rock, during the passage, all three were sent flying and badly bruised. That's all of our sick-list."

"Well, well," said the commander, a little mollified, "that's not so bad; but one thing I'm determined on, adjutant: when we get to the falls, I ship every blessed woman in the command. I won't be bothered with them. And as for the married men, if they grumble, by Jove, they shall go, too. I wish there wasn't a woman left to get in the way. They are unmitigated nuisances."

The little adjutant laughed.

"Why, colonel, they told me you left Kentucky in company with a woman—old Tobacco's daughter. How's that?"

"Oh, she was only a child," said Clark, carelessly; "a plucky child, too, by the bye, and as good at hiding as an old Shawnee warrior. But we didn't travel long together. She brought me certain propositions from—well, never mind who, sir; that's my affair—and when we had talked over the business, I packed her off to her adopted father. I may see her again, if this expedition succeeds, but I doubt if I should know her again. So much for your sneer, youngster."

The boy adjutant laughed again, and said:

"So you'll see her again, if the expedition succeeds, sir? Then I suppose we're going to St. Vincents?"

Clark, who was again looking out ahead, put down the glass, and turned abruptly on his small adjutant, laying his hand heavily on his shoulder with a grim smile, as he said:

"Look here, young man, you're a smart lad, but not so smart as you think. This expedition is going—*where I choose*. Do you quite comprehend? You're as curious, sir by Jove, as if you were a woman. Ask me no questions, if you don't want to be put under arrest. I dare say the whole lot of you would like to know my intentions; but you will have to find me out of my wits first. Now, sir, take the canoe, and pay your morning visit to the fleet. Bring me back a report of the condition of the arms and ammunition, by the time we reach Arbuckle's Station, and be quick."

It was evident that the commander was somewhat irritated with his staff officer for presuming to question him, and the lad turned away very promptly, for the colonel was universally dreaded when he looked angry, which was not often.

Adjutant Frank descended to the deck, and jumped overboard into a canoe towing alongside, with which he proceeded to visit the other boats of the fleet; while Clark, left alone, paced the roof of the little cabin in silence.

In a short time the river began to grow much broader, the current slower, and the monotonous waste of forest on either bank was broken in places by clearings. At last they saw before them a lofty point, nearly bare of timber, jutting out on the right, and beheld the straight brown banks of the broad Ohio, barring their further progress in a straight line. The Kanawha became merged in the Ohio.

On the point to the north, known as Point Pleasant, stood a straggling collection of log-houses, inclosed with a palisade, and bearing the usual appurtenances of a frontier fort, including a pine-tree flag. As the people on the *bateau* caught sight of the fort, they gave three ringing cheers, responded to by the instant rushing out of a crowd of people from the houses running pell-mell to see what was coming.

Half an hour after, they were passing in front of the fort, when a boat, containing a military officer and a dozen rowers, pulled out to intercept them, and Captain Leander Arbuckle,

commandant and principal owner of the settlement, boarded Clark's boat, and saluted the colonel as if he knew him well.

"Whither bound, colonel? he asked.

"Down the river to defend Kentucky," said Clark. "Secret orders."

"Well, sir," said the captain, eagerly, "then I can put you in the way to checkmate an Indian raid, if you will join me. Only the day before yesterday I beat off a great war party of two hundred and fifty men of the Six Nations. They crossed the river here, and have gone on for the settlements on the Greenbrier river, so as to take your friends in Kentucky in the rear. Now, colonel, if you will join me, we can overtake these fellows and utterly exterminate them. Will you?"

"No, sir," said Clark, gravely; "I can not do it. My orders, if obeyed, will punish these fellows better than by following them. The settlers must take care of themselves.

Captain Arbuckle drew himself up stiffly.

"Am I to understand that you refuse to help me save our imperiled fellow-citizens, colonel?"

"You are, sir," said Clark, firmly. "If you want to follow a will-o'-the-wisp, you must do it alone. I must do my duty, which forbids me to stop a single hour on my way."

Arbuckle looked perplexed and vexed.

"But where, then, are you going?"

"Where my orders take me, sir; and that is a secret."

Arbuckle looked angry. He lifted his hat with very stiff courtesy, and said, as he turned away:

"Then I have the honor to bid you farewell, Colonel Clark, and to wish you better manners."

"And I, sir," said Clark, with equal bantering, "shall have the honor to demand an apology for those words, when I have done my duty."

Arbuckle wheeled round haughtily.

"Prove me wrong, sir, and I'll give you any satisfaction you wish. Good-morning, sir."

A moment after, captain and colonel parted, like two peppery Southerners, as they were, ready to cut each other's throats on a point of etiquette.*

* Historically correct in main incident.

CHAPTER X.

A FRONTIER CAMP.

THE site of the present city of Louisville was but a desolate wilderness a hundred years ago; when forest and prairie divided the banks of the river, and the game roamed, unfrightened by white or red. Here, late in the month of June, 1778, a considerable camp was pitched, the rows of fires and tethered horses announcing the presence of several hundred men, while the woodland costume of the occupants proclaimed them to be unmitigated backwoods settlers and hunters.

A large, powerful man, black-haired and bearded, with tremendous shoulders, stood by the banks of the Ohio, in company with Boone and Kenton, all three watching the stream above them, where the outlines of Clark's bateaux were readily discernible, coming down the river. Below them could be heard the roaring noise of those steep and dangerous rapids, now known as Louisville Falls; and at this point had Clark ordered a concentration of all the forces raised to defend Kentucky.

The big man was the renowned Captain Harrod, of Harrodsburg, whose company was one of those designed for the secret expedition, whose purpose was as yet unknown to all but the leader.

"I'm thinkin' we'll know all about the colonel's plans middlin' quick, when he comes in," remarked Kenton, as he leaned on his rifle. "The boys are in fur a scrimmage, but they won't go unless they know whar they're goin' to."

"You may bet your boots on that," said Harrod, dryly. "I hain't no objections to tacklin' Old Nick, ef I know whar I'm goin'; but I ain't to be fooled with *secret orders* by no George Clark, when I 'c'u'd turn him over my knee and spank him."

Daniel Boone turned his quiet blue eyes on Harrod, saying:

"Ain't you a little hard on Colonel Clark, Billy? He ain't

asked you to go on a wild-geese chase yet. I know you're a good man of your hands, Billy, but Clark's no boy. Wait till he tells us where we are to go, before you get mad. He holds the State commission, remember, to order us all."

Harrod shook his head sulkily.

"He's a good sodger, Dan'l, no discount on that; but I don't like these hyar secret orders. Why don't he come out and tell us whar he's goin' like a man?"

"Because there are spies round, Billy," said Boone, boldly

Who knows but what the British General at Detroit would hear all about his doings, if he divided the secret with a lot of fellows like them?" indicating the camp with a scornful gesture; "so full of whisky—when they can get it, that a child might suck them dry."

"There are reason in cunnel's words, Billy," said Kenton, quietly. "Leastwise there ain't no use talkin', till Cunnel Clark comes. See, the head boat's landin' on Corn Island, and I guess we'll hev to foller them into camp there."

In fact, at this moment, Clark's boats put in to an island that lay in the center of the river, and proceeded to disembark their crews, in sight of the Kentuckians.

Shortly after, a bark canoe shot out from the island, crossed the shallow belt of water that separated it from the south bank, and landed the same little officer already referred to as Adjutant Frank.

This smart little officer came strutting up to Big Bill Harrod, with a slender rapier clanking at his heels, and asked:

"Where shall I find Captain Bowman, the commandant, air?"

Harrod looked down, half-contemptuously, at this tiny officer, whose head about reached his breast, and answered with a question:

"And what the Old Nick do *you* want of Joe Bowman, bubby? He ain't used to suckin' 'lasses candy."

The little officer laughed merrily, without seeming in the least abashed.

"I see, you're not Bowman, my man, for I was told he was a gentleman. Captain Kenton where is Bowman?"

Kenton started.

"Why, how the Old Scratch do *you* know my name, sonny? I disremember ever seeing you before."

"I am Colonel Clark's adjutant, gentlemen," said Frank, pulling up with considerable dignity, notwithstanding his small size. "If you've no civil answer to give me, I'll go elsewhere! I carry *orders*!"

"Captain Bowman is down in camp, with Captain Dillard, sir," said Daniel Boone, suddenly stepping forward and saluting the other with respect. "Don't mind these rough fellows, adjutant; it's their Kentucky way, and they mean no harm. I'll go to the camp with you."

"Hold on," said Harrod, gruffly. "That younker said something about my not bein' a gentleman. I ain't goin' to be talked to that way by none of George Clark's whipper-snappers."

In a moment the little officer had wheeled sharp round, and marched up to the huge borderer.

"Well, sir," he said, defiantly, "I said you were no gentleman, to answer a civil question as you did. I repeat it. Now then, name your time and place, and I'll fight you!"

For a moment the giant looked down at the slender form of this incarnation of pluck, pure and simple, as if he was puzzled. At last he burst into a roar of laughter, for he was a good-natured fellow after all, and said:

"I guess you're right, arter all, little bantam. I durstn't fight ye, *that* I know, for I couldn't see to hit ye, ef ye stood edgewise. Let's shake hands. I'm Bill Harrod of Harrodsburg, and by Gosh, I'm sorry I riled ye. Put it there."

He held out a broad and horny palm, into which Frank insinuated his own diminutive hand, enduring a painful squeeze with great fortitude. Then all four, in perfect harmony, proceeded to the camp, where the senior captain, Joseph Bowman of Virginia, welcomed the little adjutant with great courtesy, and received the latter's message.

"Colonel Clark's compliments, gentlemen, and he has gone into camp on Corn Island. The river is fordable here, and he wishes you to bring over your companies and camp with him, when he will announce the object of the expedition, and call for volunteers."

The news was spread from mouth to mouth with won-

derful rapidity, the half-disciplined frontiersmen crowding round their commanders to hear the message, in a manner that would have caused a martinet to despair of their military character.

Nevertheless, Bowman issued the order, like an old officer.

"Git ready to move camp, boys; and look sharp."

Inside of ten minutes, three companies of mounted riflemen stood by their horses' heads, silent and obedient, and when Bowman rode into the ford, there was not a single straggler left behind.

The little adjutant crossed in his canoe, and on the further bank they found three more companies, drawn up in front of their camp, all silent and orderly, and anxiously expecting the news, about to be promulgated, of the destination of the expedition.

Colonel Clark was the only mounted man on the island, and he rode up, and greeted his allies with great courtesy.

"You will go into camp at the other end of the island, captain," he said, to Bowman. "There are too many of the enemy's Indians about, to trust a camp on shore to their annoyances. Go into camp, dismount your men, and be ready for dress parade at sunset. I will then announce the orders."

There was an evident disposition, among the rough borderers of Harrod's and Dillard's companies, to grumble at this order, but Clark checked it in a manner that showed his knowledge of frontier nature. Riding down the column, he called out:

"What, gentlemen, have we a lot of curious old women in the ranks? If so, please to ride home. I want nothing but brave men, where *I* am going. For shame! Don't you know me well enough to know that George Clark has a meaning for whatever he says? Forward, gentlemen, and obey orders like men!"

In a moment a dead silence fell on the three companies, and the camp was formed with marvelous expedition and order.

An hour after that, at the call of the bugle, six hundred men were under arms in a hollow square, and the backwoods leader addressed them, amid intense anxiety from all to hear the news.

CHAPTER XI

THE SECRET DISCLOSED.

"GENTLEMEN of Kentucky and Virginia," began the colonel, "for six long years have we striven on the dark and bloody ground to keep a foothold on the inheritance we are earning for our children. For three years of that time, our whole land has been fighting against fearful odds on the side of the unnatural mother country. Not content with hiring Hessians to come over and murder us, they have bribed the savages to fire our houses and scalp women and children, from Cherry Valley to Harrodsburg."

Here there was a growl of assent, "That's so." "Cuss 'em." "We'll get square, some day."

"Soldiers," continued Clark, addressing them by the title he knew they were most proud of, "the time has come when we must turn the tables on the British. Saratoga has shown them that we can beat their best troops, and all along the Atlantic States they are running like whipped hounds!"

A tremendous yell greeted the reference.

"Now," cried the colonel, "since we are safe on the east, let us turn to the west. The Indians have tormented us long enough. We chase them, and 'tis like attacking a swarm of wasps. We can not catch them. Well, boys, what do you do when the wasps get too troublesome?"

He paused, as if to await a reply. There was an awkward silence for near a minute. Then Daniel Boone, who stood near Clark, and out of the ranks, observed in his clear, quiet tones:

"We hunt for the nest, and burn it up, some night, colonel."

"Right, old comrade!" exclaimed the young leader, amid a whispered chorus of excited comments; "*we find the nest, and burn it up.* Well, gentlemen, these wasps come not from one nest, but *three*: and their names are Detroit, St.

Vincent's,* and Kaskaskia. Detroit is a fortified town, beyond our reach. St. Vincent's is too strong for us as yet. Kaskaskia, the furthest of all, is the most dangerous to Kentucky. Secure in their distance from us, the British think they need fear nothing. Gentlemen, I have orders from Governor Henry of Virginia *to take Kaskaskia* and save Kentucky forever. Who will volunteer to go with me, and strangle the snake in his den?"

There was a deep silence following this speech, at the end of which Captain Harrod stepped forward and made a characteristic speech:

"Colonel George Rogers Clark, *Esquire*: Sir, I've be'n a-grumblin' a long time about these hyar *secret orders*, and, I reckon, be'n makin' a darned jackmule of myself about it. Colonel, I take it all back, and damme, sir, I'll lift the ha'r off any feller as says you ain't a full team and two mules to spar', with a yaller dawg hitched under the tail-board. I'm with you, colonel, while thar's a drop of blood in my body, and these hyar Harrodsburg bu'sters, they travel with me, you kin bet all the clothes you ever owned. Thar!"

A rousing cheer from Harrod's company applauded the speech, and it was followed by equally warm indorsement from every captain and company, with one exception.

This was captain Dillard, whose company was raised near Harrod's, and entertained considerable jealousy of the others.

Captain Dillard, when questioned point-blank by Clark, before the rest, replied:

"Waal, colonel, ef I'd knowed you war a-goin' on any sich a wild-goose chase as this hyar, I wouldn't have pledged my credit to the boys, and asked 'em to come. You're a-goin' a long way, and it's more than likely you'll git beat. Ef so, whar are ye? Worse off than ever, a thousand miles from hum, and no one to help ye?"

The cautious captain's words were not without their effect

* St. Vincent's, now Vincennes, on the Wabash between Indiana and Illinois. Kaskaskia on the Mississippi at its junction with the Kaskaskia river on the western border of Illinois. These three posts, once French, had passed to England at the end of the French and Indian war, and were the rallying points for Indian raids, to be supplied with arms by British officers.

In damping the men's spirits, and it was with great adroitness that Clark replied, in closing the discussion :

"That's all provided for, captain. We have bateaux enough to carry us all down the Mississippi to New Orleans, where the Spanish and French will be only too glad to pay us like princes to fight the Indians for them. *But we shall not get beat.* We shall take them by surprise, kill the British soldiers, save Kentucky, and come home worth two hundred and fifty acres of land apiece. Governor Henry has promised it to us, and I have the patent in my pocket. Now, gentlemen, since you're all agreed to follow me, disperse to your quarters. Captain Bowman, you are officer of the day. Secure all the boats, and place sentries at the ford. Let no man cross without my orders. I wish to see the captains in my cabin at once. Adjutant, dismiss the parade."

As stiffly and formally as if nothing had happened, he signified by his manner that discussion was over. The officers returned to their companies ; the little adjutant called up the sergeants and received reports ; and finally parade was dismissed, with a ceremony rarely seen among the rough frontiersmen.

Guards were set around the boats and at the fort, and the whole camp was soon a buzz of conflicting voices on the prospects of the famous expedition to Kaskaskia. Some of Dillard's men were disposed to gloomy prophecies, influenced by their captain, but the greater part were light-hearted, reckless hunters, to whom the idea of a distant and dangerous expedition acted as a charm.

These laughed at the croakers, and prognosticated great things of the expedition, as they devoured their rations, which the foresight of Clarke had collected at the falls in large quantities. None knew better than Clark the road through the stomach to a soldier's heart, and none appreciated it better.

At last all was quiet, and the fires dying away, the camp was buried in profound slumber.

Two hours after midnight Colonel Clark was awakened by a touch on his shoulder. Starting up, he saw the little adjutant before him, who spoke at once.

"Colonel, the whole of Dillard's men, with their first lieutenant, have deserted, and forded the river on the way home."

In a moment Clark was on his feet, broad awake.

"Have they taken their horses? Has any one else gone? Have the sentries at the ford played us false?"

"Not one, sir. The scoundrels crossed higher up, leaving their horses in camp. Dillard remains here. I only found it out five minutes ago while making my rounds."

Clark laid his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Frank, you're alive, but you're worth ten giants. Call the bugler and sound to arms. I'll send you after them, lad."

The leader walked quickly out to the parade-ground, and inside of five minutes the bugle sounded and the men came filing out of their bivouacs in silence, forming with a celerity and order that veteran soldiers could not have excelled. They were all well used to night alarms, and expected an Indian attack at least.

When the colonel, in a few brief, nervous words, informed them of the cowardly treachery of their comrades, and called for a party to pursue them, there was a roar of indignation. Every man in camp clamored to go after the "durned ornary skunks," as they called them, and Clark hastily selected the first score who presented themselves, mounted them on the horses of the deserters, and sent them off with Captain Harrod and the little adjutant, with orders to shoot all who resisted.

Away went the capturing party at full speed across the ford, and the rest of the night was spent in excited discussion, for all were too angry to sleep.

About an hour before noon Harrod's party returned with seven or eight of the captured deserters, reporting the rest as scattered to the four winds, and the rest of the day was spent in selecting the companies to go to Kaskaskia, while the rest were detailed to go to Kentucky and defend the frontiers during the absence of their comrades.

Then on the next day, the 24th June, 1778, ten bateaux, carrying four strong companies of hardy rangers, dropped down the rapids of the Ohio, and set off on their dangerous expedition to the unknown wilds of the Illinois country

while, as if to appall them with the terrors of superstition, the sun passed into a total eclipse, and darkness covered the heavens at the instant they entered the passage.* There let us leave them, on their venturesome way, and turn to the great post which they were trying to reach.

CHAPTER XII.

KASKASKIA.

THE Fourth of July is generally a hot day. The Fourth of July, 1778, was a particularly hot day around the town of Kaskaskia, as it basked in the sun on the banks of two rivers, the tin roofs of its quaint old houses shining like mirrors. Kaskaskia, a hundred years ago, was like Quebec to-day, a quaint, rambling town of steep, narrow streets, nominally English, actually French in language and sentiment. Founded two years before Philadelphia, it was at that time the emporium of Indian trade, and far ahead of the infant St. Louis, eighty miles further up.

What changes a century makes! To-day Kaskaskia is a decayed village, and St. Louis a city of palaces.

On a rounded bluff opposite the town stood a handsome stone fort, with rows of bright brass guns trained on the place, and that so closely as to obviate the necessity of walls around the houses.

Kaskaskia was safe from the Indians for two reasons.

First, the fort frightened the thievish ones; second, the place was full of trappers and traders who had intermarried with every tribe in the West. This last point is the grand secret of the control which the French have always exercised over the Indians. At the present day it turns into friends and allies thousands of the same race in the Hudson's Bay Territories, that are relentless foes to white men in the American Territories.

* Historical fact.

In Kaskaskia, on that sultry Fourth, a hundred years ago, trader and Indian could be seen side by side in every shady place, smoking over bargains in furs like old friends.

The blazing sun at last dipped behind the western prairies, and a gentle breeze came sighing up the Mississippi, when Monsieur Rocheblave, the French-English Governor, who was sitting by the open window of the government house at the top of the hill, suddenly spoke to his wife.

"Coralie, *ma chere*, I do believe I see Mademoiselle Roland, and that she is coming hither. Yes, it is she indeed."

Madame Rocheblave, who was lying on a sofa fanning herself languidly, bleated out, with a whining, querulous tone:

"Rube? What can the girl want? I declare I wish my cousin Roland had done any thing in the world rather than leave that wild creature in the way he did, half the time for me to take care of, the other half to that ugly Indian they call the Grand Door of the Wabash. I wish he'd keep her altogether. She has lost all the manner of society, and tells the truth so quick and plain that she lacerates my feelings."

M. Rocheblave had risen to look out of the window better.

"For all that, my angel," he said, soothingly, "we must remember that mademoiselle your cousin is a very important person. She represents the union between us and the tribes, a link carefully forged by her illustrious father, at his own cost, which *must* be maintained. Therefore, Coralie, be polite to mademoiselle, who is about to become our guest. It is a great privilege you and I enjoy, to entertain a princess."

"A princess!" said madame, ill-temperedly. "I've had enough of these wild princesses. What does she come for? It's not time for her visit for two months yet."

"I suppose that the visit portends something to us," said the Governor. "At all events, I shall not be wanting in respect to our illustrious guest."

And the Governor hastily arranged his costume, and left the room, to greet the approaching personage.

At the principal gate of the "palace," as it was styled, he paused, to watch the progress of a cavalcade, coming up the street.

At the head rode, on a very handsome dappled mustang, our

little friend Ruby Roland, dressed in gorgeous velvets and brocades, heavily laced with gold, and loaded with jewelry. All the finery that the wealth of a tribe could lavish on her, was displayed on her trim figure, and she rode her spirited little horse like a man, with all a man's ease and dexterity.

She carried no arms, but this was compensated for by her escort, consisting of twelve grim-looking chiefs, armed to the teeth.

The Governor bowed very low to this strangely-situated girl, at once perfect lady and Indian princess, and himself assisted her to dismount from her horse, while a score of obedient servants came running out to perform the same service to her escort.

For every one in the town knew by this time that a great embassy was come from 'La Grande Porte.' The chiefs with Ruby were recognized as being the heads of twelve independent tribes, united under the great confederacy of the Wabash, and such chiefs always expected deferential treatment.

The Governor embraced his cousin by marriage in the most courtly French style, and shook hands with all the chiefs in turn, welcoming them with a string of French and Indian compliments together, and ushering them into the drawing-room.

Here Madame la Gouverneuse, who had recovered her outward equanimity, whatever her inward feelings, embraced Ruby with a cordiality that would have deceived any male beholder, and which the quick-witted girl herself penetrated in an instant.

Then, after a sumptuous feast on the most unsubstantial of French pastry and ice cream, articles devoured with intense relish by the wild sons of the prairie, the Governor opened negotiations by a delicate hint that business was in order.

Ruby at once became spokeswoman for her party, and proceeded to explain the object of her visit in a speech which excited general grunts of approbation from her stoical attendants.

"We have come," said the girl, in the metaphorical Indian style, "from the banks of the great river to the east, to the father of all waters. We are few as a flock of antelopes, but behind us are our brothers, like the buffalo, without num-

ber. From the great fresh sea on the north, by the country of the Michigans, to the great river Ohio, that never fails, we are one house, and that house has one door, who is our Red Father. The Grand Door has opened to let us forth, to bring great words to our French father. Tabac has spoken, and if our French Father listen to his words it is well. If not, we will go back, and the door will be shut."

"The French Father is dead," said Rocheblave, cautiously. "He can not hear my red brethren's words. We have an English father now, who gives us blankets and guns. Let the chiefs talk to him."

Rocheblave, though of French parents, was entirely devoted to the English government, and he hoped by speaking as he did, to check the proposition he felt, rather than saw, was coming.

Ruby proceeded with simple directness to her mission.

"The Great Spirit has sent a bird to his children," she said, "to speak with a straight tongue and tell us the truth. He tells us that the French Father is *not* dead. He has been asleep for many years, but now is awake. He calls to his red-children to arouse and drive out the fork-tongued English who have stolen his lands, and hired the red-men to make war on the Big-Knives (Americans). The French Father has made friends with the Big-Knives, and has declared war against the English. My father is French and ought to love his French Father. The Grand Door is open, and if the Governor of Kaskaskia is wise, he will enter into our house, and forsake the fork-tongues forever, as we have. I have spoken."

The Governor was astounded. This was the first intelligence he had received of the American alliance with France, so lately concluded. He could hardly credit it. Therefore, he said:

"Is my daughter sure that the bird spoke true? There are lying birds about, sent by the rebellious Big-Knives. Let my red brothers beware of such."

"The bird spoke true," said Ruby, firmly. "The tribes of the Wabash are ashamed to have served the English. Henceforth they befriend the Big-Knives, as their French Father wishes them. I have spoken."

And the twelve chiefs grunted an emphatic assent.

Rocheblave was puzzled, and temporized. He said :

"This is a grave matter. I must consult the old men and warriors. I will give an answer to the Grand Door at noon to-morrow. Is it good?"

"It is not good," said Ruby, rising. "To-morrow we will come, but the Grand Door will be shut. The Governor of Kaskaskia must knock ere it be opened."

So saying, she swept from the room, followed by her dusky escort, leaving Rocheblave astonished, while madame whined :

"*Mon Dieu ?* Why did my cousin Roland make such a fool of himself ? I told you she was a barbarian."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FORT.

THE night closed in over Kaskaskia, cool and pleasant after the sultry day. There was no moon, but the stars were uncommonly brilliant, and there was no difficulty in traveling. The Governor of Kaskaskia, a few days before, had been exercising the militia of the neighboring country, with a considerable force of Indian allies ; for some vague rumors had reached him of a possible raid by the rebel Virginians. All along the banks of the Mississippi scouts and spies were stationed with swift horses, to give notice of any force ascending the river. But, as the days wore on, and no one came, the vigilance of the townspeople had slackened.

Guard was mounted regularly at the fort, and there were several hundred militia in the town ; but the parades were more formal than useful, and twenty men were judged sufficient for the defense of the fort.

Governor Rocheblave retired to rest that night, somewhat disturbed in mind. The message from old Tabac had puzzled and annoyed him, but he was too confident of his own ability to manage the Indians to fear for the issue of next day's conference.

He sat up till ten o'clock, preparing an artful speech, to be

followed by munificent presents, and finally went to bed hopeful of success.

Meanwhile, Ruby and her red friends were hospitably quartered in an empty building near the "palace," and to all appearance were settled for the night, when the rest of the townspeople were asleep.

About three-quarters of a mile above the town, on the opposite side of the river Kaskaskia, stood the farm-house of Monsieur Picard, a worthy market-gardener, who supplied the town with vegetables; and around this house, about an hour after dark, events were taking place which would have alarmed the Governor considerably, had he known them.

Monsieur Picard and his family, in their night-clothes, and all pale with terror, were surrounded by a crowd of rough-looking men, who were questioning them about the town, in English.

"*Mon Dieu, messieurs,*" said the unhappy gardener, "eef you vill not keel me, I vill tell all I know. Monsieur Rocheblave, de Gouverneur, he have two, t'ree, twenty t'ousand soldier dere, and he march and make parade, eh, *mon Dieu*, how I know vat it mean—I be not *soldat*, I do not know, but dey say de Americains dey come to cut our t'roats, *comme les Indiens*, and M. Rocheblave he say dat he *extair-r-minate* dem for King Shorge!"

"How many men are in the fort?" inquired one man, less savage in aspect than the rest, and in good French.

"Not many, monsieur, not many. There is only the company of Capitaine Ledoux to mount guard there," said Picard, glibly.

"Good!" said the other. "Where's Adjutant Frank?"

It was Clark who spoke. There was a short silence.

Then Captain Harrod answered.

"I thought you knew, colonel. The little cuss found a hoss yesterday, and rid off into the perrary, all alone, this arternoon. He said as how he war a-goin' on a scout on his own hook."

Clark seemed disturbed.

"I know, captain, I know; but I thought he had come back. The boy promised to be with us by dark. Has any one seen him since?"

There was no answer, and Clark groaned aloud.

"The rash lad! He must have lost his way. If there were any Indians about, I should judge him a prisoner; and if he has been taken into Kaskaskia, the town will be alarmed, and we shall have hard work!"

It was seldom the cautious leader allowed his feelings to be publicly noticed, and it was evident he was deeply stirred by the fate of the little adjutant, who had become a wonderful favorite with all the command during the weary secret march over the prairies of Illinois. He turned sternly on Picard, saying:

"Now, sir, tell me quick, and tell me truly, as you value your life, has the Governor of Kaskaskia any notion we are here?"

"My God! monsieur, how can he? Should I be where I am, if that were the case? I will tell the truth, monsieur. The Governor expects you to come up the river, and men are there, on the watch."

"Then we waste time here," said the leader, abruptly. "Major Bowman, take your own company, with Harrod's and Helm's. Cross in this man's boat, and march on the town as I told you. When you hear a gun from the fort, rush in with a shout, take the place, and disarm every one. You know the orders. Captain Montgomery's company will follow me. Place a guard over this house, and shoot any one who tries to come out. Get in there!"

He signified his orders to the terrified Picards, who hurried into the house, expecting nothing less than instant death. The ignorant French were full of superstitious terrors about the Americans, whom they had been taught to regard as merciless savages; and Clark's seeming brutality only confirmed the impression.

Then there was a hurried embarkation by the river-side.

Honest Picard never dreamed that his flat-boat, which had conveyed so many loads of cabbage to Kaskaskia, would come one July night, to be a transport for ferocious enemies. But it was even so, now. Loaded down to the water's edge with wild-looking backwoodsmen, it served as a ferry for the three companies destined to attack the town, and, in less than

an hour after, the whole body was on its silent way to Kaskaskia.

At the moment of starting, Clark led the remaining company down the river toward the fort, only about a half-mile below. The men proceeded in Indian file, stealing along like ghosts; and a person a hundred yards off could have suspected nothing.

In a short time the gray bastions of the fort loomed up before them, standing at the edge of a high bank, down which one of its outworks stretched to the water's edge.

The leader stayed his men with a signal and stole forward himself to reconnoiter, when the sound of voices in gay conversation struck his ear; and, the moment after, a little postern door low down by the water, opened, and two men came out and advanced toward the Americans as if careless of danger.

Without an order given, every one of the invaders sunk down to the earth in an instant and vanished from view, leaving Clark alone in the middle of the open glacis.

The commander did not drop. He knew that he had been seen, for the two men halted and seemed undecided whether to advance or not.

Suddenly one of them called out in French:

"*Qui vive ?* (Who goes there ?) Is it thou, Picard ?"

Clark started violently. It was the voice of the missing adjutant. With admirable presence of mind he imitated the voice and rustic accent of the gardener, answering:

"It is I, indeed. Has the doctor gone back yet? My wife is sick."

"The doctor went back at sunset," answered Frank, "but here is Poirier, the hospital steward. He and I were coming over to break a bottle with thee, Picard; but, since thy wife is sick, Poirier shall do what he can."

"Come on then, in God's name," said Clark, turning away to aid the stratagem. "You have a lancet to let blood, without doubt. Hasten, ere it be too late. She has fits."

"Come on, Poirier," cried the little adjutant; and the hospital steward, completely deceived, hurried along after Clark, until in the midst of the crouching borderers.

In another moment he was surrounded, and a dozen knives

brandished at his throat, with a sternly whispered command to keep silence, if he valued his life.

The poor fellow was so overcome with terror that he dropped senseless in the road, and the little adjutant hurriedly said:

"Into the fort, colonel, like lightning. The garrison sleep. I'll tell you how I fooled them when we're safe. Not a moment is to be lost. I'll show the way."

With the rapid, stealthy rush of so many tigers, Montgomery's company followed the flying figure to the fort, swarmed in at the postern, took the sentries on the ramparts without firing a shot, and in ten minutes were in full possession.

Then, with his own band, Clark fired a six-pound shot over the town, a signal answered by loud yells from the opposite side of the river, as Bowman's men rushed in like a tempest through the deserted streets.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SURPRISE.

GOVERNOR ROCHEBLAVE was roused from a dream, in which he was being decorated with the Grand Cross of the Bath for eminent services to his Britannic majesty, by the sound of whoops, yells, and rifle-shots under his very house. Then came the crash of glass and plaster, as several bullets came through his window, and sent pieces of ceiling splintering over the floor.

The Governor jumped out of bed, scared out of his wits, and madame began to scream at the top of her voice, a scream echoed from every quarter of the "palace," as the maid-servants heard the racket in the streets.

Then came the boom of four or five cannon, and a louder crash than before, as the big chimney of the government house, struck by a six-pound shot, toppled down over the roof in a mass of ruins.

Then a stillness perfectly awful succeeded for several minutes, followed by the banging of opening windows, as the terrified inhabitants began to look out.

As for Governor Rocheblave, he remembered the bullets too well to dare go to his own windows; and presently came the clatter of hoofs on the pavement below, as a horseman pulled up from full speed. Then a stentorian voice bellowed, in horribly bad French:

"Fusillez tout homme dans la rue! Fermez fenetres!"

But fear is a quick translator, and every one knew the meaning of those words.

"SHOOT EVERY MAN IN THE STREET! SHUT WINDOWS!"

A disinterested person would have admired the alacrity with which the windows banged to, in obedience to the order; but the people of Kaskaskia were too keenly alive to their own perils to admire any thing.

In a moment Governor Rocheblave came to his senses, and understood every thing. At first he had thought of an Indian rising, but the cannon-shots and bad French convinced him that a more formidable foe was at hand.

"Coralie, it is the barbarous Americans. What shall we do?" he faltered, as he gazed, panic-stricken, at his wife. "The papers—the agreements with the chiefs—they will find them, and I shall be shot."

"Not so fast," said madame, more coolly. "I know these men, if they are Americans. They are fools, where women are concerned. Where are the papers?"

"In the box," said the trembling Governor, pointing to a casket of mahogany, open on the table.

In a moment the quick-witted woman pounced on the box, bore it to her bed, and swept up the loose papers to the same receptacle. She had hardly time to jump in after them when a clatter of weapons was heard on the staircase, and a loud knock was heard at the front door.

"Who's there?" screamed madame, excitedly. "Are these barbarians that insult the privacy of a lady's chamber? Go away?"

There was a short, whispered consultation outside, and a voice spoke, in very bad French:

"Open the door, Governor. We know you're here. We will not hurt the lady, but we must have the Governor."

"Monsieur Rocheblave has fled," cried the lady, angrily, as her husband, quaking with fear, turned up the light and moved toward the door. "Have you no manners, pigs, that you do not believe a lady? Go away!"

The only answer was a blow that burst the fastening of the door, and into the room stalked Major Bowman, second in command to Clark, who advanced to Rocheblave with a cocked pistol in his hand, saying:

"Monsieur, you are my prisoner. Surrender your papers."

Rocheblave sunk trembling into a chair.

"I surrender, monsieur. Spare my life, and pray do not insult my wife, if you are gentlemen."

"We *are* gentlemen," said Bowman, quietly. "Madame is safe; but you must dress and come with me to the commander. No excuses, sir. I give you five minutes to dress. Then you must come with us as you are. Where are your papers?"

Rocheblave pointed to an open bureau, littered with the more unimportant papers of his government, and the Kentuckian advanced to inspect them, while the Governor finished his dressing under the eye of a burly sergeant at the door, whose rifle looked remarkably ready for action at a moment's notice.

But as the Governor found that he was quite unmolested, his spirits began to recover from the first shock of surprise, and he asked:

"Are you not going to give me my parole, sir? I suppose that you make war like honorable soldiers."

Bowman made no reply till he had made a hasty examination of all the loose papers, finding nothing worthy of note.

Then he turned round to Rocheblave, who was now dressed:

"In five minutes, sir, my commander will be here. He can answer your question. I find you have hidden your papers."

Here madame, who had ducked under the bed-clothes, put out her head to listen. There was considerable galloping to

and fro in the streets, and a great clattering, as if a party were dismounting at the gate.

Rocheblave, who quickly saw that he had fallen into the hands of organized troops, notwithstanding their rough exterior, began to assume a more haughty tone, as became a British officer.

"I don't know what you mean, sir," he said, angrily. "You have come into my house, like a parcel of rebel thieves, as you are, and I have given up my papers. Are you not satisfied, but do you wish to insult a prisoner?"

Madame, who had taken her cue, cried out:

"They want the silver, Auguste—that's what they want, these thieves. Show them the plate-chest, and you will hear no more of papers. I know them well."

Bowman, who was a chivalrous Kentucky gentleman, was very much embarrassed by the lady's bitter tongue, and was greatly relieved by hearing the voice of his commander on the stairs. He rose and retreated sheepishly to the door, while madame exchanged a triumphant glance with her husband, and fired a volley of spiteful sarcasms at the abashed soldier.

The next moment Clark entered the room, followed by the boy adjutant.

A conference, in low tones, took place between the three officers, at the end of which Clark advanced to the Governor.

The border leader, haggard and unshorn, with dirty, ragged dress, was by no means a reassuring sight. The moment madame laid eyes on him, she trembled for her papers. While Clark was speaking to the Governor, the little adjutant, whose face had been blacked all over, so that he looked worse than his leader, went peering about the room in a manner very different from that of his restrained and dignified chiefs.

"Governor," said Clark, "Major Bowman tells me you have hidden all the valuable papers of your office. Where are they? Give them up, and I give you your parole. Refuse, and I put a guard over you."

"Who are you, sir?" asked Rocheblave, sulkily.

"I am Colonel Clark of Kentucky," said the other. "I have taken your town, and your people are being disarmed

as fast as my men can pile the weapons. Where are your papers?"

"I know, colonel," said the quiet voice of Adjutant Frank. As he spoke he pointed to madame, who sat up in the bed, guarding her treasures. The lady screamed indignantly.

"Wretches, barbarians, do you bring boys with you to insult ladies? The Governor has no papers. I swear it. These are but my private jewels and trinkets, and let me see a man dare to touch them."

Little Frank was actually approaching the lady, to take the papers his sharp eyes had discovered, when the deep voice of Clark broke in:

"Hold, Mr. Frank. Better that she should hide any amount of papers, than that a gentleman should insult a lady. Governor, you're a close prisoner till I see those papers. Gentlemen, clear the room. To our other duties."

CHAPTER XV.

THE ALGONQUIN VENUS.

At a late hour next day Kaskaskia presented a strange sight. Not a single house was open, every window and door was closely fastened, the very beasts remained bolted in their stables, and a grim-looking patrol of mounted borderers rode up and down the echoing streets, with cocked rifles.

A town of fifteen hundred inhabitants was trembling with abject terror before a force of some two hundred resolute men, who had captured it without shedding a drop of blood, by the pure moral influence of fear.

The main body of the invaders lay at the edge of the town, by their bivouac fires, which burned brightly at the expense of all the neighboring fences. There was bluff Simon Kenton, who had left his old friend Boone in Kentucky, to share the perils and glories of the Kaskaskia expedition, and who was lolling on his back, laughing over the night's adventures to a group of borderers.

"Golly, Bill," said he, to Harrod, who was devouring a huge chunk of corn-bread with great relish, "how them French Britishers do skeer, to be sure! I b'lieve ef we'd axed them fur all thar money last night, instead of their shootin'-irons, they'd 'a' giv it jest as easy."

"Don't you b'lieve it, Sime," said Harrod, dryly. "It takes a powerful skeer to git a feller's money. But, Gosh, boys, that thar little cuss of a adjutant of ours, he did fly round amazin' last night. Jest like a bug on a hot griddle, he war. And ef it hadn't b'en fur him, Lord knows ef we'd 'a' tuk the fort at all."

"Who is that adjutant?" inquired Major Bowman, who was sitting close by them, in republican simplicity, guiltless of military etiquette when off duty. "I never saw him in Kentucky; but he seems to be a great favorite with Clark."

"He's some relation of Governor Henry's," said Captain Helm, a stout, jolly, red-faced officer from Virginia. "Clark told me he brought a letter from Henry to him, which asked him, as a personal favor, to make Frank his adjutant. The colonel hesitated, on account of the lad's being so young, but I must say, gentlemen, I don't ever remember seeing a smarter officer of his inches."

"Thar's the little cuss now," cried Harrod, laughing, as the little officer rode out of a by street and came up to the bivouac. "I tell *you*, gentlemen, he are gritty, if he are small. Don't he sit his hoss pritty? Gosh, if he war only a gal, wouldn't he make a reg'lar ringtailed snorter! I c'u'd hug him myself."

"He are pretty 'nuff fur a gal, that's as true as Gospel, boys," said Kenton, meditatively. "But, no gal c'u'd dash around the way he does; and he's got the grit of a dozen wildcats."

Here little Frank galloped up, on a very handsome mustang, which he rode in among the recumbent borderers with delicious coolness, causing them to tumble out of the way in a terrible hurry.

Had any one else in the command done such a thing, he would have been plucked off his animal and soundly beaten in a twinkling; but the little adjutant and his pony were

general favorites, and seemed able to go anywhere, without offense.

"Well, Bowman," cried the youngster, gayly, "your men are not good for much to search for arms, after all. Here's a building, not fifty feet from your bivouac, with twelve Indians in it, every man fully armed and in his war-paint."

"Oh, nonsense, Frank," said the major, disbelieving him. "how could that be, and we not know it?"

"Ah, major, you're not supposed to know every thing," said the boy, saucily. "I heard all about it last night, but I didn't want our stupid-heads to know it; for you couldn't disarm those fellows in a hurry."

"Are you serious, Frank?"

"Never more so."

The adjutant pointed to a large building near the government house, the identical one in which Ruby Roland and her red escort had been quartered the night before. The doors and windows were shut, and there was no appearance that the place was tenanted.

"There they are," said the boy; "and with them a great Indian princess, who came to the Governor with a message from Tobacco, head chief and Grand Door of the Wabash. I heard all about it last night, when I was spying about the town."

"How did you get in, adjutant?" asked Helm, curiously. "You're not a Frenchman, are you?"

"I'm a little of every thing," said the boy, laughing. "At all events, I can talk French well enough to fool a *habitant*. And I can fool an Indian, too. What will you bet I don't send the whole lot, princess and all, out of that building, before your eyes, in twenty minutes?"

"A hundred dollars, even, you don't," said Helm, eagerly. He was a skilled Indian-trader and interpreter, himself, and thought he knew all about Indians.

"Done!" said Frank, promptly.

He rode up the steps of the house he had indicated, and knocked loudly at the door with the butt of a pistol.

Immediately it was flung open, and a stately Indian chief, in scarlet blanket, was revealed to the doubting gaze of the officers. As coolly as if doing a commonplace thing, the lit-

the adjutant rode straight into the house, the door clanged to, and all was again still and silent.

"Wal," exclaimed Kenton, rubbing his eyes, "that 'ar little cuss do beat the deuce, I sw'ar. How did he know them Injuns was thar?"

"Why, of course, some of the townspeople told him," said Helm, in a snappish tone. "Perhaps the Governor let it out to Clark. I suppose these fellows are there on some embassy. I wonder where the colonel is?"

"Quartered at Rocheblave's," said Bowman. "What do you want?"

"I want to know what we ought to do about these savages," said Helm. "They may murder that boy, in there, and it's not safe to leave them the way they're left now."

"Oh, nonsense, Helm; that youngster's able to take care of himself. You're bound to wait your twenty minutes, you know, on account of your bet."

"Well, if he doesn't come out then, I'm going in after him," said Helm, firmly. "I fear the lad's run into a trap."

"All right, when the time's up," said Bowman; "but I don't believe that boy's born to be murdered."

They continued gazing at the mysterious building in deep doubt for some time, till, just as Helm's patience was exhausted, the big door flew open once more, and forth rode, in all the splendor of an Indian princess, Ruby Roland, bewildering in her beauty, and, wheeling her horse sharp round to the right, galloped off up the street, followed by her retinue of chiefs, among whom the little adjutant could be seen, with a tall chief on each side of him, as the cavalcade dashed out of the hall and down the steps, all mounted as they were, like a whirlwind. Up the street they went, toward the government house, ere Helm had fully recovered from his amazement.

Then the party could be seen dismounting and entering the government house, when Bowman said:

"By Jove, gentlemen, one thing's certain. Frank's found an angel for us. That girl is a perfect Algonquin Venus."

And plain Captain Bill Harrod said:

"Gosh, Bowman, don't be flingin' dictionaries at us. What in Old Scratch is a Algonquin Venus?"

Says Simon Kenton:

"It's Latin for a nice little gal, sweet as maple-syrup. And by Gosh, boys, I'd give a hull farm to hug that gal."

To which Bill elegantly replied :

"She wouldn't look at sich a ornary cuss as you. Go 'way, Sime. She don't know you."

Simon jumped up excitedly.

"And by Gosh, I'll bet my rifle ag'in' your'n that I know her, and that she knows me. That gal's Ruby Roland, daughter of old Tobacco ; and you may jist bet she knows me and Cunnel Boone like a book, you ornary squirrel-picker. So thar."

CHAPTER XVI.

RUBY'S VISIT.

COLONEL CLARK was seated in the great drawing-room of the government house, with Rocheblave near him, a sentry at the open door, and one of the principal inhabitants standing in an humble attitude before him. Clark's face was stern and cold, for he was yet playing a part, and desired to frighten the people of Kaskaskia to the utmost.

"Well, sir," he said, sternly, "and so you will not confess who is the principal instigator of these Indian atrocities? Beware, for I can order you out to be shot in one minute."

"And if you shoot me ten times over, monsieur," said the other, in a shaking voice, "I could tell no more. I am but a poor dealer in snuff and tobacco, and know nothing of Indian plots. Ask Monsieur Rocheblave. He knows all. There was an Indian embassy came to him only yesterday evening."

Rocheblave, at the first mention of his name, had been signaling the other to keep quiet, but in vain.

"No, you need not wink at me, monsieur ; I shall tell the American General all I know. I will not be shot to please you. There were twelve chiefs from the Wabash, monsieur, with Mademoiselle Rubie, the daughter of the Grand Door

and they were quartered in the old arsenal for the night, if they have not escaped."

Clark turned grimly on Rocheblave.

"Why did I not know this, sir?"

"Indeed, monsieur le colonel, I meant no harm," said Rocheblave, hastily; "and, indeed, these fellows are only friends of a cousin of my wife's, Mademoiselle Rubi Roland."

"Ruby Roland," repeated Clark, slowly; "is that the adopted daughter of old Tabac?"

"The same, monsieur," said the snuff-merchant, eagerly.

"Then, if she is here, I am glad," said Clark, quietly. "You can go back home, sir; but do not stop to speak to a soul. The patrol has orders to shoot any citizen standing still in the streets. Go, and remember."

The snuff-merchant bowed down to the very ground, and backed from the room, just as a tremendous clatter of hoofs outside announced the arrival of Ruby Roland and her cavalcade.

Clarke hurried to the window, somewhat startled, and beheld the twelve stalwart Indians and the girl springing off their horses.

The sight of his boy adjutant's uniform among them reassured him of their intentions, for Clark had grown to feel almost a superstitious confidence in this reckless lad.

He returned to his seat, then, with measured steps, for he knew the importance of preserving dignity before the stately Indians. With perfect patience he remained sitting, waiting for his new guests, while Rocheblave, who felt his position keenly, fidgeted about uneasily in his chair.

In a few minutes more the sentry at the door challenged, as the sound of moccasined feet approached.

"Let them pass, sentry," said Clark, quietly; and into the room swept Ruby Roland, in a perfect blaze of splendor, followed by her dusky escort.

Involuntarily Clark rose, and bowed with the deepest respect to the beautiful creature. It seemed to him as if he beheld her for the first time.

It was not quite true, as he had told Frank, that Ruby had failed to leave any impression on his mind the year before,

when he had seen her under the disadvantages of fatigue and hunger, which had reduced her features to gauntness. Still, his own mind had been so much preoccupied at the time with his Kaskaskia scheme, that he apparently noticed little else.

Now, however, in the moment of his triumph, when this beautiful girl approached him, dressed like a princess, the bold leader, for the first time in his life, felt a curious throbbing at his heart, as he bowed before her to the very ground, at least as deep as the obsequious snuff-merchant.

To his surprise, Ruby returned the courtesy with the very least inclination of the head, then turned and addressed a few words to her retinue, who gravely seated themselves in a line on the floor, in front of the door.

Then the girl advanced to Rocheblave, who stood undecided what to do, and gravely embraced him in the French fashion.

"My cousin," she said, "I have heard of your misfortune. Why did you not listen to my words? I warned you that the door would be shut; but you see I have come, as I promised."

"You might as well have stayed away," said the ex-Governor, sulkily. "You must have known these people were coming, and would not warn your old allies."

"Our old ally was my father's king," said Ruby, proudly; "and it was to please him that I did not betray the Big-Knives. I have been with them on their march when they knew not, and my warriors have watched every step they took. Where were your senses, that you only watched the river? The road over the prairie from Fort Massac is straight. A child could follow it to Kaskaskia."

"Spare me your sneers, mademoiselle," said Rocheblave, not without dignity; "there is my captor, if you wish to turn to the rising sun. I can entertain no further proposals, for I am a prisoner."

"I did not come here to reproach you, my cousin," said Ruby, gently; "but for a kinder purpose by far. I will open the door again, if you will enter. See now, you were born a Frenchman, and the French king owned all this place. Now France and America are allies, and I call to you to

return to your old allegiance; desert this sour-faced British nation, and be a gay friend of America as I am."

"Never," exclaimed Rocheblave, angrily—"never will I submit to be called a friend of these accursed rebel hounds. Let them do their worst. I have eaten the king's bread, and I will never desert him. Go, tempt Coralie, if you like. I will not yield."

"And where is Coralie?" asked Ruby, with a slight smile.

"In her chamber, which the rebel dogs dare not profane," said the Governor, loftily. "Even there they had the insolence to penetrate last night."

"They found but little, I venture to say," answered Ruby. "I know Coralie too well to doubt her ability to hoodwink these men of Kentucky, who—between us, cousin—are easily blinded by a fine woman. By this time, I doubt not that the agreements with Blackfish and the Chickasaw chiefs are burnt. How much do you pay for white scalps this year, cousin?"

Clark had been a silent and interested listener to this brief colloquy, and he noticed that the Governor turned deadly pale at the home-thrust of the girl. Now he advanced himself and spoke to Ruby.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "I may possibly have passed out of your remembrance, but I have not forgotten the lady who came through such perils to Harrodsburg, to propose to me the alliance of the tribes of the Wabash. Whatever papers Madame Rocheblave may destroy, mademoiselle, it were better she should do it than that we should insult a lady. That is a point of honor with us rough Kentuckians."

Ruby looked at him critically, and unconsciously Clark turned crimson under the glance. It seemed to him that he had never before seemed so dirty and unkempt in his life, as when he stood before this brilliant beauty, in his ragged campaign uniform, with his unshaven face.

"You Kentuckians have more mercy than we women," she said. "I would have got those papers for you. But you Americans are easily worked on by a pretty face. I remember once when you were not so polite as now. You were rude to me, monsieur."

And Clark, greatly confused, stammered that he "did not quite remember to what she referred," as the straightforward beauty fixed him with her great dark eyes.

"I know," she said. "I have a good memory, monsieur, and, if I have a mind, I can overturn all your fine expedition in the moment of success. Be polite now, for you will find that one year has made a great difference with Ruby Roland."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CURE'S EMBASSY.

CLARK was about to answer deprecatingly, when the voice of the sentry at the lower door was heard challenging :

"Halt! you kurn't pass here, mounseer. Colonel's quarters."

"But if I wish to see the colonel, my friend," said a mild voice, "can not I go in? I am the parish priest, father Gibault."

"Kurn't help it," said the sentry, sturdily. "My orders is to let no one pass. Sergeant give me a shakin' up about lettin' in them 'ere Injins, jest now."

"But my dear friend," said the priest, mildly, "I do but wish to ask permission to wait on the commander, with five of the oldest inhabitants of the town, to represent to him our cruel position."

Clark, who had been listening intently to this dialogue, now spoke to the sentry at his own door.

"Sentry, is the adjutant outside? Call him in."

"Please, colonel, the adjutant bean't hyar," said the man.

"Not here," said Clark, surprised. "Why I saw him at the door. Where is he?"

Ruby Roland answered him :

"Your adjutant is a great friend of mine, colonel, and has gone on a message for me. In his absence, allow me to act for him, as I am responsible for his reappearance. What do you wish done?"

"I wish—but, mademoiselle, I could not think of giving you so much trouble."

"I prefer it, colonel. You wish to send a message?"

"I wish to inform the gentleman below that I will receive him and his friends in half an hour; and I want to see all my officers here."

"It shall be done, monsieur," said the girl, quietly.

Then she turned to her grim escort, and spoke to them in her own tongue a few words. Every chief sprung up, saluted Clark with great gravity, and followed Ruby from the room.

Clark went to the window, and looked down. He saw an old man in a priest's cassock, waiting by the gate; and very soon saw Ruby and the Indians come out and speak to him. Then the priest turned away, Ruby and the Indians mounted, rode down the streets toward the American camp, and all was still again.

Ten minutes after, Bowman, Harrod, and the principal officers, rode up to the door, and came up-stairs, when Clark dismissed the Governor, under guard, to his wife's room, and awaited the return of the priest and his party.

Inquiring what had become of Ruby and the Indians, the leader was told that they had re-entered the arsenal and disappeared. The time passed in discussing their plans for the future; and then, punctually to the half-hour, they heard a horseman pull up outside, and the gay voice of the little adjutant, singing an old French hunting-song, as he came up stairs.

Then the small officer tripped into the room, saluted gayly, and said:

"Colonel, that little squaw princess detained me unwarrantably, but you know a Kentuckian must obey the ladies. There are a lot of gray-headed old gentlemen coming up the street and I think they look like a deputation."

Clark looked at the boy severely. Somehow he didn't like the familiar way in which the latter spoke of Ruby.

"Young gentleman," he said, "when you have more sense, you will esteem it an honor to wait on a lady, especially one so beautiful and modest as mademoiselle. Speak of her with proper respect, sir. She is no squaw."

"I cry you mercy, colonel," quoth the saucy lad. "I for

got that you had just seen her. You know you told me once you would not know her again. How is it now?"

"I should know her among a million," said Clark, warmly.

The little adjutant burst out laughing, in defiance of all military etiquette.

"Gad, gentlemen, I fear the colonel's smitten to the heart," he cried. "The invulnerable colonel's fallen in love with this dusky princess; and he's ready to cut any man's throat that says a word against her."

The other officers, rough backwoodsmen all, save Bowman and Montgomery, used only to republican equality, made no scruple of joining in the laugh. Clark turned white with anger, and his voice was deep with concentrated rage, as he said:

"Adjutant Frank, go to your quarters under arrest. Gentlemen, the man that persists in this unseemly merriment becomes my enemy at any hazard. Do I command this expedition or not?"

In a moment there was a dead silence, broken only by Frank. Contrary to his usual custom, the boy seemed possessed with a perfect devil of impudence that day.

"All right, colonel," he said, gayly. "The quarters are with the young lady at present. We'll see what she says, when she hears that you vented the rage on your junior officer that you did not dare to show to her, or an equal."

In a moment Clark strode forward to where the audacious officer stood, with a look of concentrated fury on his face. The backwoods leader possessed a furious temper, which he generally controlled only by exercise of an iron will. For a moment every one in the room thought that he was about to strike the boy down, and big Bill Harrod half-stepped forward to lay hands on his commander.

But, ere the big captain reached him, Clark had controlled his passion by a mighty effort, and spoke in a low, hoarse tone:

"Boy, while this expedition lasts, I command here. When it is over, I'll give you satisfaction on equal terms. Think yourself lucky that I do not strangle you here. It is but your weakness protects you now. But do not dare again to

breathe one word of disrespect toward the lady whom I saw this morning, or I will not answer for my forbearance. I have business. Go."

He pointed to the door with a trembling finger, his face ashy pale, his eyes glittering dangerously. The little adjutant saluted, gravely, and went to the door.

At the door he turned and said, in a tone of indescribable insolency:

"What a coil, gentlemen, about a little squaw!"

Big Bill Harrod rushed at him with a stifled guffaw, and hustled him off, growling:

"You tarnation sarcy little cuss, d'yer want ter get killed? Cunnel's madder than twenty wildeats now."

And indeed the good-natured borderer's action was the only thing that brought Clark to his senses, for the exasperated chief had already half-drawn his sword.

But as Harrod carried the boy down-stairs, the other officers gathered round Clark, expostulating, and Kenton remarked:

"Cunnel, the little cuss hev gone crazy, you may bet. He never acted so afore, and it's b'en a tearin' hot day. I suspicion he's b'en sun-struck."

"Drunk, more likely," said Helm, in a tone of contempt. "Those boys are not fit to trust with a bottle of applejack. They go cracked in five minutes."

"Let it pass, gentlemen," said Clark, impatiently. "Remember we have business to do, and this priest and his friends are at the gate by this time. I'll attend to that boy in due time. Now get ready to receive this deputation."

They settled themselves in chairs round the room, and soon Bill Harrod lumbered in, escorting father Gibault and five venerable citizens, who trembled as if their last hour had come, and remained near the door, bowing confusedly, and looking among the ragged, dirty figures before them as if doubting the evidence of their senses.

At last the priest faltered out to Harrod:

"Please, good monsieur, will you not tell me which of these honorable gentlemen is your leader?"

"That thar man in the big cheer, with the laced hat," said

Harrod, pointing with his thumb at Clark, whose battered head-covering had once been laced. "Spit out what you've got to say, lively."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAST MASS.

THE poor *curé* looked from one to the other, as if doubting whether they were not playing a cruel practical joke on him. The faces of all the officers had been blackened in streaks with gunpowder and water, in a fashion which many of the grimly-humorous backwoodsmen had taken from the Indian war-paint. In dress they were no way superior to their men, and the wearing of swords was all that distinguished them. Such a looking set of ruffians might have frightened any one, much more the poor Frenchmen, whose minds had been industriously filled with horrible stories about the "rebels" by Hamilton's and Rocheblave's emissaries.

Clark, whose pity was excited by the evident terror of these feeble old men, came forward kindly enough, and said:

"I am Colonel Clark, of Kentucky, gentlemen, commander of this force. What is your business? Fear nothing. We will not kill you. Speak freely."

Father Gibault, who seemed to be spokesman, was so much affected by the kind tone, that he faltered:

"God bless you, monsieur! God bless you! You are very kind, and we are very old."

Clark waved his hand impatiently.

"Well, well, gentlemen, what is your business? Speak quickly, for I am busy."

"Monsieur," said the priest, earnestly, "we are well aware that your people do not belong to our church, and that you hold its doctrines in derision; but, monsieur, we beg leave to assure you that we are very quiet, harmless people. We know that the fortune of war has thrown us into your hands, and that we must expect to be separated from our happy

homes, perhaps never to meet again. But, oh, monsieur, we beg, in the name of humanity, that you will allow us to meet once more, for the last time in our church, to hear one last mass, and to take leave of each other."

And the five old men, with one accord, broke out weeping in the most piteous manner, crying :

"Oh, monsieur, for the love of God!" "Pity us!" "Indeed we did not know who you were." "The commandant told us you were all savages." "But we know better now."

As if by one consent, the rough backwoodsmen jumped up and stamped away to the windows, while muttered exclamations of sympathy were heard.

Clark waved his hand for silence, for he had his face under more control than his subordinates, though he too was much affected by the spectacle of old men in tears.

Then he said, in a careless tone :

"I have nothing to say against your church, gentlemen. That is a matter we Americans leave every man to settle with his God. If your people wish to assemble in the church, they can do so ; but at the same time, if they do, they must not venture out of town. I will withdraw the troops to let you assemble. Is that all?"

"Oh, thanks, monsieur, thanks!" cried father Gibault, in a tone of great relief. "But, oh, monsieur, if you would only listen to us for a little while, I feel confident that we could convince you that our intentions have always been of the most innocent—"

"That will do," said the colonel, sternly. "I have listened to you long enough, gentlemen. I have no leisure for further intercourse. The officer of the day will withdraw the men from the town and you can meet at the church Good-day."

He saluted stiffly, and turned away, while the overawed group of delegates left the room in mournful silence, the terror being at its utmost height.

When they were fairly in the street, Clark turned to his officers, who stood silently round, and said, solemnly :

"Gentlemen, pray God that when this war is over we may never have another. This is a bad business, and were it not that I intend to change the mourning of these poor creatures

to joy before to-morrow, I swear to you that I would march back to Kentucky to-night. No, I wouldn't neither; but I hate to be looked on as a wild beast. Bowman, keep the men out of the houses, as soon as the people go to the church. I swear I feel sick at heart."

It was nearly sunset before the people separated from the church. The windows were wide open, for it was still very hot and sultry, and the whole force of the Americans was drawn up near by, resting silently on their arms, auditors of all that passed and very respectful auditors.

They could hear the solemn voice of the old priest, chanting mass, the responses of the congregation broken by sobs and tears. Then several of the older inhabitants made long and pathetic speeches, urging to resignation under the will of Heaven, while women and children cried, and men groaned aloud.

And, outside of the church, the supposed barbarians, whom the terrified people within looked on as little better than their fierce Indian neighbors, were hushed in pitying silence, while some of the roughest broke down and blubbered secretly.

At last there was a deep hush, within and without, as the priest, with faltering voice pronounced the benediction, and a stir, that followed, announced that the people were coming out.

Suddenly Clark, who had been standing, gloomily leaning on his sword, started.

"Attention!" he shouted, sternly. "Stand to your arms there, men! Who gave you leave to fall out? Shoulder arms! Support arms! Silence in the ranks! Officers to your posts!"

Then, as the door opened, and father Gibault came out with a few of the principal inhabitants, they were met by the sight of a grim line of brown rifle-barrels, as the savage-looking frontiersmen obeyed their chief's orders.

Clark, with drawn sword, stood rigidly in front of his men, looking at the priest, as the latter solemnly advanced with his little deputation, while the church door was full of pale anxious people, afraid to advance a step further.

Father Gibault advanced to Clark, and said :

"Monsieur le colonel, to you and your brave comrades, I beg leave to offer, in the name of my flock, our deep gratitude for the indulgence we have received. Whether we live or die, we shall always remember and bless you for this kindness. And now, monsieur, at the prayer of my children, I beg leave to address you, our conqueror, on a subject dearer to us than any other. Monsieur, may I speak, before all?"

A pin might have been heard to drop as Clark said, briefly :

"Speak on, father."

"Monsieur," said the good old priest, clasping his hands, and with the tears streaming down his cheeks, as he spoke with impassioned earnestness, "we are sensible that our present situation is the fate of war, cruel merciless war. Monsieur, we are all ready to submit, to the loss of our property. But oh, monsieur, we beg only one thing. I beg for my poor children that they may not be separated from their wives and tender little ones. Our property and lives are yours, but, for the love of the good God, dear monsieur, spare us the sight of those little ones torn from us to starve, and if you must take us away for slaves, do not separate our families. If you have the further mercy to allow us some clothes and provisions for our support during the terrible journey before us, monsieur, God will bless you for it, and we shall never forget the indulgence."

The old man paused a moment amid a breathless silence to look into the face of Clark. It was set into a stern frown, and the leader had his teeth dug into his under lip. But, not a sign of pity made its appearance on his pale countenance, and his eyes were glaring at the priest, as if the Kentuckian were in a perfect fury.

"Monsieur," continued father Gibault, in a trembling tone, "I assure you that the conduct of our people during this war has been influenced by our commandants, whom we were always taught to obey. I am not sure, monsieur, that any of us, at this moment, clearly understand the cause of dispute between your own honorable country and his majesty of England. All that we know we have been told by our Governors, and as you are aware, dear good monsieur, there

are but few opportunities, in these remote regions, of acquiring accurate information. Indeed, monsieur, with all our commandant's stories to mislead and deceive us, there are very many among us, who have expressed themselves friendly to the gallant Americans, as much as they durst under the eyes of the Governor's spies. Oh, monsieur, dear good monsieur, you must have a kind heart hidden beneath that rough frock. In the name of God whom I serve, spare my flock the cruelty of separation, have pity on their wives and little tender babes, and do not turn them out to starve."

As the priest spoke he fell on his knees, and with him the whole deputation, while a wailing sob went up from the church-door, whence every word was distinctly audible.

The sob was echoed all along the rigid line of Americans, and you could see the muskets shake, while a hoarse murmur of sympathy rolled along the line.

Clark turned abruptly away, stamped his foot violently, and dashed the point of his sword into the earth, as if in a terrible passion.

"Silence in the ranks, you soft-headed fools!" he shouted. "Do you think George Rogers Clark does not know his own business?"

Then turning on the trembling Frenchmen, he cried fiercely:

"Gentlemen, do you mistake us for savages? I am almost certain you do from your language. Do you think that we Americans intend to strip women and children, or take the bread out of their mouths? My countrymen, gentlemen, disdain to make war upon helpless innocence. It was to prevent the horrors of Indian butchery upon our own wives and children, that we have taken arms and penetrated into this remote stronghold of British and Indian barbarity, and not for the despicable prospect of plunder. Now that the King of France has united his powerful arms with those of America, the war will not in all probability last long; but the inhabitants of Kaskaskia are at liberty to take which side they please, without the least danger to their property and families. Nor will your religion be any source of disagreement, as all religions are regarded with equal respect in the eye of the American law, and any insult to it shall be pun-

ished immediately. And now to prove my sincerity, please inform your fellow-citizens that they are quite at liberty to conduct themselves as usual, without the least apprehension. I am now convinced, from what I have learned since my arrival among you, that you have been misinformed and prejudiced against us by British officers; and all your friends that are in confinement shall immediately be released."

And the unmasked stoic, who had played his part of tyrant with so much imposing fierceness, broke down at last, and shook hands with the agitated old men, the tears streaming down his face.

A mighty cheer broke from the borderers, and in a moment, all discipline disappeared, as French and Americans fraternized in a grand burst of joy.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LAMPOON.

AT an early hour on a day of the following week, all Kaskaskia was astir. Great changes had taken place during that week. The undeceived citizens had found out the true nature of their invaders, and had not only welcomed them, but had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States Government, and become its warmest friends.

Not only that, but they had actually assisted them by force of arms to complete that surprising conquest of Illinois, which was made without the effusion of a drop of blood. When Clark dispatched Major Bowman with half his force, to reduce Cahokia, an important trading-station higher up the river, the major was accompanied by two bodies of French militia, with restored arms, who were the first to enter the place and inform the astounded inhabitants of the change of masters. The enterprise was completely successful, the fort at Cahokia was garrisoned with Americans, and the conquest of Illinois was virtually over.

Then, for the first time, Clark was able to turn his atten-

tion to pacifying and regulating his suddenly acquired conquests, and toward the question of reducing the second of the great chain of posts from the lakes to the Mississippi, St. Vincent's.

The Indian chiefs from the Wabash, with their beautiful princess, were also constantly in his thoughts; and almost every day a grand council was held, at which were settled the preliminaries of those treaties which were to secure Kentucky from savage barbarity.

In all these councils, Ruby Roland acted as interpreter and chief at once of her dusky delegation, and the intercourse between her and the American leader was constant and quite familiar. The girl invariably insisted on the presence of father Gibault, who had become an ardent ally of the Americans, and the counsels of the two were of the utmost use to Clark, in the novel position in which he found himself placed.

And all this while the backwoods leader, who had been at the very first struck by Ruby's beauty, found himself falling quickly and surely into the meshes of a love-net, from which it was impossible to extricate himself.

Ruby, whose manner toward him had been cold and distant at first, had retained her coldness, varied by bursts of great apparent friendliness, in public.

But on one or two occasions, when Clark had endeavored, at the close of business, to engage her in conversation, she had invariably repelled him with the utmost haughtiness. While father Gibault was present, she would talk freely, displaying all the graces of a cultivated woman; but to Clark alone she was as cold and cutting as a north-west wind.

Ruby Roland was indeed a strange compound of civilization and barbarism. Father Gibault himself, who had given her the greater part of her education, was often puzzled at her moods. The Indian warrior and the polished lady were about equally mixed in her manner. Of the humble, submissive squaw there was no trace, for dignity and pride were in every motion.

At last Clark grew desperate. It was at the end of the last council, on the day when Bowman returned from Cahokia, when a final treaty of peace and amity had been con-

cluded between the tribes of the Wabash on the one hand, and the Americans on the other. When the chiefs rose to depart, after shaking hands with the colonel, Clark laid his hand on Ruby's arm, as she was about to follow them, and said, in a clear voice :

"Mademoiselle Roland, with the chief's daughter my business is over. With the French lady I desire a few minutes' conversation."

Ruby looked at him from head to foot as she withdrew her arm from his touch.

"You can not be much acquainted with French customs, mon-sieur," she said, icily, "if you are not aware that unmarried girls do not hold conversation with bachelors, alone."

"I invite father Gibault to be present, said the Kentuckian, steadily determined not to be beaten. "There can be no impropriety in our talking before your religious instructor."

Ruby smiled very provokingly.

"There may be no impropriety, sir, but you will please to note that I belong to the delegation with which I came, and as a chief of the Wabash I have a duty to my friends. I can not leave them. So I wish you good morning."

"Stay, madam," cried Clark, excitedly. "In heaven's name, how am I to take you? Are you chief or lady? Keep to one character, I beseech you. Which is it to be?"

Ruby drew her little figure up, and threw her velvet mantle over one shoulder, Indian fashion, with an air of the most ineffable pride.

"It is to be any thing, monsieur, which will keep me from speaking to you, who have avenged yourself on a poor boy for the cruelties you dare not resent from me."

And she was at the door ere Clark had recovered from his astonishment. Then he rushed forward, crying :

"Mademoiselle, only one single word. If I forgive the adjutant, will you grant me one single interview?"

"Try it, and see," was the unsatisfactory reply, as the girl stepped haughtily from the room.

"*Hélas, mon ami*, it is no use," said father Gibault, elevating his shoulders to his ears in a truly French shrug. "You can not drive that child from her own way. I remember when she was little, before her father died—rest his soul, poor

Captain Roland—she would roam away alone among the Indians, and they were more dangerous then than now. She would go up to the grimmest warrior in his war-paint, and pull his scalp-lock as he sat by the fire; and 'twas her wonderful boldness that first gained her the love of the old chief, Tabac. She was made a chief before she was ten years old, and formally adopted as head Medicine chief. They looked on her with superstition, and revered her knowledge. In faith, monsieur, she knows all that I do in the way of science and art, and moreover, she is the head of all Indian woodcraft and magic. But you can not turn her out of the way, any more than the sun in heaven. She is immutable."

Clark stood ruminating awhile over the priest's words. At last he answered:

"Father, give me your advice what to do."

He detailed the history of his quarrel with the adjutant, and concluded by saying:

"What less could I do, sir, than put under arrest the young insolent, who insulted her and me alike? Is it just, sir, for mademoiselle to visit this on me as a crime?"

Father Gibault took a pinch of snuff, and was silent.

"Why do you not answer, monsieur?" said Clark, pettishly

"Monsieur le colonel," said Gibault, dryly, "it is obvious to me that your experience of women is limited. I never expect from them such a cold and severe article as justice."

"Then what am I to do, in heaven's name, sir?" asked the colonel, in a tone of desperation.

Gibault once more took snuff, and reflected a little.

"I think," he said, at last, "that if I were you, (while I am not, for I am a priest in orders, bound to celibacy) I should take the hint the lady gave me, and—"

"Release the adjutant?" asked Clark, as the priest paused.

"Monsieur, *as a priest*, I can not give you any advice which would tend toward uniting a good Catholic and yourself."

And father Gibault gave the borderer a curious look, that was compounded of sly humor and triumph.

Clark started back in amazement. So much was he engrossed with what he thought mademoiselle's injustice, that he had not clearly understood whither he was tending.

"What do you mean?" he said, stammeringly.

"I mean," said the priest, quietly, "that every one in Kaskaskia, except Colonel Clark, is fully aware that he has fallen in love with Mademoiselle Roland, and that he is jealous of a mere boy, because that boy is a favorite of mademoiselle's. Why, colonel, they are making songs about it in the streets."

Even as the priest spoke, they heard a chorus of lads in the street, as the young rascals passed under the windows, singing at the top of their voices a doggerel ditty, to the old air of "Malbrook," better known nowadays as "We won't go home till morning." Clark listened, and turned red and pale alternately, as he clutched his sword-hilt; for the boys were coupling his own name with Ruby's in the disrespectful manner common to French *gamin* and New York "bboy" alike.

For the benefit of our readers we append the song, with a free translation:

"Le Colonel Clark est brave,
 Mais il n'est qu'un esclave
 Sous la main si douce et suave
 De Mademoiselle Rubie Roland,
 La demoiselle sauvage et belle-elle-elle,
 La belle et sauvage demoiselle-elle-elle.
 Car Mademoiselle Rubie, la belle,
 La pousse debout de sa selle
 Cette brave et sauvage demoiselle,
 La demoiselle Rubie Roland,
 La demoiselle Rubie Roland—and—and, etc.*

No English words can convey, however, the mocking accent of the refrain in the chorus, and Clark was so much enraged that he would have rushed out into the street, had not father Gibault thrown himself into the way, crying:

"Hold, monsieur, in heaven's name what are you about to do? Consider, that you will make yourself ridiculous. These people must sing, or they will plot."

* Colonel Clark may be brave,
 But he's naught but a slave,
 Though his chain's flower laid,
 To the sweet savage maid.
 For Mademoiselle Ruby with one little touch
 Has sent from his saddle, her power is such,
 The warrior proud, till he do her behest,
 While fair Ruby Roland is queen of the west.

The colonel saw the folly of which he had nearly been guilty, and restrained himself. A moment later, he saw cause to congratulate himself, for, as he stood by the window, looking down at the impudent boys, the old French town constable made his appearance in the nick of time, and promptly collared two of the young scamps.

"You see, monsieur," said father Gibault, pointing, "you did well to leave our old authorities in force. The old people will not suffer you to be insulted. See old Antoine. He knows hows to deal with the Kaskaskia boys."

In effect, old Antoine seemed to be equal to the occasion, for he was a very strong old man, and he knocked the heads of the two boys together several times, with a force that made them howl again, while the rest of the lately uproarious group looked on, from afar off, in great di-may.

Clark, who had been standing by the open window, put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a silver dollar, which he threw down to the old constable, with a—

"*Merci, mon ami.*"

Old Antoine pulled off his hat, made a low bow, and pocketed the coin with many genuflexions, while the border leader turned away to Gibault, saying:

"My eyes are opened, father. The boys are right, after all; but what shall I do about my adjutant? If it should really happen that she loved him, I believe I should kill them both."

"How old is this adjutant?" inquired father Gibault, quietly. "Remember, my son, that you lovers are apt to be jealous about trifles, and that is foolish. How old is he?"

"A mere boy, not sixteen, and small for his age," said Clark, not without confusion. "But you must not fancy I am jealous of *him*, father—a little whipper-snapper, whom I could turn over my knee. No, sir; but you have no conception of the insolence with which he referred to mademoiselle. It was for that I placed him under arrest, and he kept talking back, with a manner perfectly indescribable. By heavens, sir, I wonder I did not kill him on the spot."

Father Gibault smiled.

"I do not think you need be afraid of this boy, monsieur, unless, indeed, you make a martyr of him. I would advise

you to follow mademoiselle's hint, as a friend, not as a priest."

"I'll do it, father," said the Kentuckian, promptly. "Here, orderly, go to the arsenal where the Indian chiefs lodge, and say to Adjutant Frank, with my compliments, that I wish to see him."

The orderly left, and the commander paced up and down the room impatiently, waiting for the arrival of the culprit adjutant.

CHAPTER XX

MUTINY.

IN a short time after, the orderly rapped at the door, and on being told to enter, announced :

"Please, colonel, the adjutant says as how he wants to know ef he's released from arrest?"

"Did he dare to ask you that?" inquired Clark, sharply ; and as he spoke his eye flashed.

"Please, sir, they wouldn't let me see him," said the man.

"Who wouldn't let you see him?"

The commander was growing very angry, for he was a strict disciplinarian, and this sounded terrible in his ears.

The orderly hesitated.

"Speak quick, man ! Who wouldn't let you see him?"

"Colonel," said the rough borderer, who was, after all, only a half-disciplined, independent militia-man ; "'tain't my fault, honest ; but them Injuns and the young lady was at the door, and the young lady she guv me the message from adjutant ; and please, colonel, the boys are all in a crowd around the door, and they cheered her when she spoke, and it's my belief, sir—"

"That will do," said Clark, imperiously. "I understand you. There's mutiny afoot, and you're afraid. Out of the way."

Before father Gibault could interfere to check him, the colonel was out of the room and half-way down stairs. He

was in a state of the greatest excitement, and shouted for his horse in a manner strangely unlike his usual quiet way. Two minutes after, he was galloping down the street toward the camp, which, as before, was pitched in front of the disused arsenal occupied by the Indians.

Around the door, as the orderly had said, the whole of the motley force of borderers were clustered; and from the murmurs that reached his ear, it was evident that an unusual excitement was going on.

As the colonel galloped up, a dead silence fell on all; but not a man stirred out of his way, and matters looked quite squally, for the rough backwoodsmen made no scruple of looking with open defiance at their leader.

The tact of Clark was infinite, or he would not have been the successful leader that he was. He saw now that he had made a mistake, and pulled up his horse by the crowd, saying, quietly:

"Stand out of my way, men. I want to enter that building."

He looked at the door of the arsenal, and there stood beautiful Ruby Roland, with her savage allies round her, stern and impassive, looking straight at him.

Not a man stirred out of his path. Some of them crowded closer in his way, and he saw that they all carried their rifles. For the first time in his life, Clark was at a loss what to do. The instinct of discipline impelled him to violence, but his experience of the reckless Kentuckians told him that such a step would be useless.

Moreover, Bowman and all his officers stood in a group at a fire near by, with their backs resolutely turned to the scene of disturbance. Clark was too intensely proud to call for assistance from them which he saw they were unwilling to grant. He was also too politic to precipitate a fight by attempting to ride into the crowd.

For fully a minute an ominous silence prevailed, and then Clark spoke to Ruby, in a clear, loud voice:

"Mademoiselle, is my adjutant in your quarters? If so, I call on you, as my ally, to deliver him up to me."

Like a silver trumpet came back Ruby's answer.

"He is here. He shall not go forth till he is released from arrest, except to be tried by a court-martial."

Instantly a tremendous cheer burst from all the borderers and Clark saw that he had not a friend left.

It was a bitter and humiliating thing for the proud leader, in the moment of his triumph over enemies; and Clark felt it keenly.

For one moment he looked reproachfully at Ruby, then on his rebellious men. There was something in his face that abashed the boldest there, for the anger had gone out of it entirely, and there was an expression of proud regret that seemed for the first time to suggest that there might be *two* sides to this question. Then the border leader put his hands to his holsters, drew forth his pistols, and cast them on the ground, amid a dead silence. He unbuckled his sword and held it up in his right hand, as he said:

“Mademoiselle, I see now who is my *real* enemy. God forgive you. Men, I never yet condescended to ask a favor of you. I have given you a new country. Keep it for yourselves. I am no longer your leader.”

He threw down the sword as he spoke, and wheeled his horse. Slowly and sadly, but with head proudly erect, he rode up the street to the government house, passed it, and walked his horse through the principal street out into the open prairie.

The men had conquered their commander.

But never in this world did men seem so utterly unable to take advantage of a victory. They looked at each other in silence and dismay, as the consequences of their acts dawned upon them. Never was leader more beloved than Clark, and only the still greater affection which they entertained for their little adjutant, and their impression that he had been harshly treated by Clark, had induced them to rebel. In that delicious ignorance of martial law, so characteristic of the American border militiamen, they had never conceived that they were doing any thing wrong; only that they were giving their colonel a gentle hint to release their favorite officer. Now, when it was too late, they all seemed bewildered, and none more so than Ruby Roland. She stood at the top of the steps, gazing blankly after Clark, as if unable to comprehend why he had not yielded.

Then, after the form of the colonel had gone almost out of

right, arose a confused hubbub of voices, as the borderers broke up into groups, and excitedly discussed the position.

As reverently as sacred relics, the weapons of their commander were lifted from the ground, and a large deputation besieged Major Bowman and the officers, to entreat the colonel to come back.

But to their great surprise, Bowman and the others were dead against them. The fact was that every one saw that they had made a mistake, and these very officers were mean enough to cast the blame off from their own shoulders, no matter where it lighted. Major Bowman was, in fact, the very meanest of all, for he threw off his sword and belt, saying :

"No, no, boys. I take no responsibility. You chose to listen to that gal over yonder, and now she'll have to get you out of the snarl. I've naught to do with it. I told you not to make such a fuss about that boy; that it would end in narm. I'll take no command of a mob like this. Go to your lady friend."

And Big Bill Harrod was still more emphatic.

"I tell yer, boys, that Frank's the sassiest little cuss ever I seen, and a good whipping would do him good. Ef yer think he's wuth more than cunnel, let him go; but ef yer don't, jest yer go over to that thur young lady, and ax *her* to go arter the cunnel, and tell him as how ye made a mistake, and ax his pardon. I guess he won't be hard on little Frank, ef *she* begs fur him, and it's my notion that nary a man in this hyar camp kin fotch him back so quick as that thar gal."

The rough captain's words were not without their effect on his audience, who involuntarily turned toward Ruby.

The girl was standing where she had been, but entirely deserted by the very men who, a moment before, had been cheering her. She seemed to realize that her brief reign of popularity was over, and that she too had made a mistake. As the soldiers timidly proffered their request, the august beauty yielded to it with grace, mounted her horse without a moment's delay, and set off at full gallop after Clark, bearing the commander's sword with her.

CHAPTER XXI.

RUBY'S MISSION.

COLONEL CLARK had already cleared the outskirts of the town, and was alone in the wild prairie, a swell of land hiding him from view. He rode slowly along, buried in painful and bitter thoughts. He began to see that he had been hasty in his first explosion of anger against the adjutant. Had it been possible to have recalled it, he would have done so ; but now that mutiny had boldly established itself, he felt that he must be firm, right or wrong. His resignation of authority, though it seemed as if wrung from him in desperation, was in reality nothing but a return of his old tact and management.

That the movement had taken his men by surprise he felt sure from the dead silence which followed his words. He fully expected that a message would come after him, but he expected it from his officers, at whom he felt very angry for not having given him their support.

He had resolved to coquette with them before he yielded, as he had all along determined, and resumed the command. He was resolved to make them realize his full value. When he heard the clatter of horsehoofs behind him, therefore, he kept steadily on. The fact that only a single person was following him somewhat surprised him, but he did not deign to turn his head.

Then some one dashed past him at full speed, and Ruby Roland, in all her splendor of beauty, wheeled around in front of his horse and halted, extending the sheathed sword with an imperious gesture.

Clark was for a moment taken aback. The next he colored angrily and waved her aside, saying :

"Mademoiselle, it is too late. You have your victory. See if you can make as good use of it as I have. Permit me to pass."

"I will not," said Ruby, firmly. "You must resume your

command, sir. There are too many lives depending on you to be lost for a foolish quarrel about a girl."

"Did you think of that, mademoiselle," he asked, bitterly, "when you undertook to excite my men to mutiny, to protect an insolent boy, who called you— No, I will not say what. No, mademoiselle, but I will say this, that it is a hard thing to find that when I did a thing to avenge *your* name from insult, *you* should be the first person to protect my enemy, and steal away my men's hearts from the leader they trusted till *you* came between us."

Ruby listened to his indignant words in silence. The girl was very pale now, and her eyes had a strange light in them, as of triumph and revenge, which struck the colonel as singular, when he met them.

"So the little girl you despised last year, and packed off to her tribe, is not so powerless, after all, monsieur?" she said, in a low tone. "She has stirred your proud heart at last."

"If it is any consolation to you to know it," said Clark, bitterly, "you know my heart as well as I do. Perhaps you and your boy lover have laughed over my endeavors to save your name from light speaking."

"Who asked you to save my name from any thing?" said she, haughtily. "You take on yourself an impertinence to do it. Did I ask you to fire up like a fool before those rude fellows, and show your heart so plainly that the boys in the streets sing lampoons about us? Who is to blame for that, sir, but you? My name, indeed! Much you have cared for it to permit it to be dragged through the mud of Kaskaskia because *you* have a temper that you can not control. I am a fool to come here to entreat you to come back. Would I had never seen you! Let the sword lie where you have dashed my name, since you are no longer fit to wear it."

And the excited girl indignantly dashed the sword on the ground, and wheeled her horse to ride away. Then it was that Clark but spurs to his own horse and darted forward, laying his hand on her bridle with iron grasp.

"Not so fast, mademoiselle," he said, sternly. "You have cast an imputation on my honor that I can not visit on you, but, by heavens, I will visit it on *him*. Do you understand?"

I see it all now. You love this boy; and now I warn you that you shall never be his, nor any other man's but mine. Do you hear? I will resume command of my troops, and my first act shall be to release your lover from arrest. For what will follow, you alone are responsible. I have done."

He let go the bridle, quietly dismounted from his horse, and picked up his sword, then mounted and turned toward the town at the same slow pace at which he had come.

Ruby sat gazing at him for a moment with a strange smile; it almost seemed tender and compassionate, and yet it was decidedly triumphant.

"I have him safe," she said, to herself.

Then she dashed away past him at the utmost speed of her mustang, swept through the streets like a whirlwind, and drew up in front of the camp, where every one was still clustered in groups. Ruby rode straight up to the officers.

"What are you doing, gentlemen?" she cried. "You have allowed the greatest General in this country to be insulted by his own troops, whom he has led to victory; and when he resigns in disgust, not one of you is fit to step into his shoes; and yet you have left it to a woman to entreat him to come back. For shame, old women that you are! Do one thing or another. Choose another chief, or welcome back your old one. Beat the drums; fall in the men! Send a deputation to request him to resume command. Act like soldiers, not like boys!"

Her fiery eloquence seemed to go like a shock through the crowd. As if by magic the drummer struck up "To the Colors;" the men rushed to their places; Bowman and Harrod mounted and rode off up the street to salute the returning commander.

The parade of Clark's Rangers had never been formed before with one-half the celerity that was manifested on this occasion; and when Clark, soon after, rode up to the center of the line, the order was perfect, and every one in his place.

As for Ruby, she was nowhere to be seen. As soon as

the parade was formed, she rode straight up the steps of the arsenal, received by her dusky escort with the same impassive silence that they had manifested all through the proceedings.

The great gray building was now closed up, silent and grim as ever, and to all appearance untenanted.

When the commander appeared, there was a dead silence. He had not greeted either Bowman or Harrod, except by stiffly answering their salute, and now the two officers repaired to their places in the line of battle.

Then the acting-adjutant gave the order "present arms!" and turned over the parade to his commander in due form. Clark drew his sword once more, and rode forward to near the center of the line. His face was particularly grim at the moment, and the silence was breathless.

"The acting-adjutant will take a sergeant and twelve men," said Clark, in a clear, hard tone, "from the right of the regiment. He will enter that building, and bring forth Adjutant John Frank, now under arrest, under guard, and report to me, here."

In dead silence the order was obeyed.

The little adjutant himself, in full uniform, with a snowy peruke covering his black locks, trim and dainty, in a laced suit of blue and silver, made his appearance in the doorway, bowed politely to the officer, and advanced into the middle of his guards, as if by a previous understanding.

Then he was marched up to the colonel, who dismissed guard and acting-adjutant alike to their places, with a sign, when colonel and adjutant stood looking at each other. The little officer was quiet, dignified, and serious, without a particle of the old sauciness. He looked his commander full in the face without blenching, and Clark said, in a very distinct tone:

"Sir, you are relieved from arrest. Take your post at parade."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE COUNCIL OF WAR.

THE silence that had so far been maintained was broken by a rapturous cheer, which the rough frontiersmen could not suppress.

Its tones were by no means offensive to Clark. They spoke of gratitude to him, not of triumph over him.

The adjutant drew his sword and retired to his post behind his commanding officer, while the latter executed a few simple movements and then returned his sword. The adjutant resumed his regular duties, took the reports of the sergeants in due form, announced the dismissal of parade, and came up with the officers in the stiff military form that has descended to the present day.

At such a time, it is usual for the colonel to say a few words to his officers, and after such a scene as had recently taken place, all expected a severe lecture from Clark.

But he merely returned their silent salute, and said:

"Officers will meet at my quarters an hour after sunset, to discuss matters of importance. Good-evening, gentlemen."

He turned coldly away, and the parade broke up in silence a wet blanket being thrown over all parties by the distant demeanor of their commander.

The little adjutant alone seemed to be quite happy over his release. When Clark was not twenty feet off, and the officers were still gloomily looking at each other, the boy spoke in a jesting tone to Harrod, saying:

"Well, Captain Bill, you see we pulled through in spite of our love-sick chief. What fools some men are!"

Harrod cast a curious glance at the boy, an apprehensive one at Clark. The colonel heard every word, and—halted.

Frank stood, with a derisive smile on a very pale face, watching his commander's back.

But Clark did not deign to turn his head. He stood there, for nearly a minute, like a statue, the officers watching him

in silence. Then he slowly nodded his head, and pursued his way to his quarters.

Then the officers broke up and departed, leaving the boy adjutant standing alone. His face grew sad and thoughtful, for not one of the men who had lately fought such a battle to save him, remained near him. Even from the ranks they had witnessed the flippant gesture with which he had pointed at his commander; and every one seemed to be somewhat disgusted with him for the nonce.

With slow steps and hanging head the young officer went to his quarters in the arsenal once more.

In the spacious drawing-room of the government house sat Clark, in a new uniform, surrounded by his officers, all renovated in their personal appearance. A number of wax candles lit up the apartment, and the center-table was littered with papers. Father Gibault sat among the rest of the officers as if he had been a chaplain all his life, and the conversation was general but desultory, as if in expectation of the arrival of some one before opening business.

At last the commander spoke :

"We are all here but the adjutant, gentlemen. Doubtless he feels a delicacy about being present. Orderly, take my compliments to the adjutant, and say that we await his presence."

The soldier disappeared, and all sat in grim silence until, fifteen minutes after, the door opened, and the little adjutant tripped into the room with his old saucy air, but without speaking, and, after saluting the colonel, dropped into a vacant chair :

Clark returned the salute with grave courtesy, and said :

"Now, gentlemen, we are ready for business. I must inform you, first, that I have at last concluded a full and satisfactory treaty with all the Indians on the Wabash, through their chiefs, and that, from the Detroit to the Ohio we have no foes among the red-men. We have taken possession of all the British posts between here and the Wabash, and Illinois is ours. Gentlemen, one post remains to be taken. St. Vincent's, town and fort, is still in the enemy's hands. *It must be taken.*"

A murmur of assent ran through the audience, and Clark was silent. Then, to the surprise of all, father Gibault arose :

"Gentlemen," said the *curé*, "I have told Colonel Clark, and now I tell you, that you need not trouble yourselves about St. Vincent's. If you will trust it to me, I will undertake to start to-morrow, and within three weeks deliver St. Vincent's into your hands, fort and all, without spilling one drop of blood. I am priest or missionary of both parishes, and if I tell the people of St. Vincent's how you have treated us here, I answer for it that they will come under American rule without firing a gun."

"Gentlemen, how say you?" said Clark. "Will you accept Monsieur Gibault's proposition, or shall we march to St. Vincent's? All in favor of acceptance will say 'Ay.'"

Not an officer hesitated to respond to the call in the affirmative.

"Now, messieurs," said Gibault, briskly, "I start to-morrow, with four or five friends, and I wish the colonel to give me one officer to receive the surrender and act as American Governor till you can visit the post in force."

"Captain Leonard Helm and Sergeant Henry will accompany you, father," said the border chief, "and Adjutant Frank shall go with the captain as second in command."

This order surprised no one, for it was evident that colonel and adjutant would never agree together again. Indeed, Clark's intention was of the kindest nature. But as the council broke up, the young officer observed, in a loud tone :

"I shall not go. So the colonel need not trouble himself."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DISCOVERY.

AT this last exhibition of insubordination, every one fancied that the commander's temper would once more break out. But, to the surprise of all, Clark remained quite calm, and took no notice of it. He ushered his other officers to the

door with his usual courtesy, and attended them to the head of the stairs, whence he watched them go out with father Gibault.

Then he turned to the sentry at the door, and said :

"Move your post to the head of the stairs, and let no one up. If you hear any noise in my room, however loud, take no notice. Let no one pass in or out without my orders."

The backwoods soldier nodded his comprehension, and the colonel re-entered his room, where, as he had expected, he found Adjutant Frank, still in his chair, which he had drawn to the table, on which rested his small feet with all the coolness in the world.

The little adjutant wore a hunting-shirt of fine blue cloth, with gold fringes to replace the usual buck-skin ornaments ; his leggins were of white doe-skin, fringed with gold ; and the white moccasin, that fitted his little foot like a glove, was sewed with gold thread. Altogether, a very natty little officer of rangers was Adjutant Frank, as he sat playing with a little blue velvet cap with a gold tassel, and whistling "Malbrook."

Clark stood at the door, looking at him for several minutes. The lad's back was turned to him, and the white peruke, which he generally wore, was now off, allowing the curls of a wonderful mass of long black hair to escape over his shoulders.

Clark looked at him long and earnestly, and as he looked, he gave an involuntary sigh. The boy was of a wonderful beauty and grace, he could not help admitting, even with all the fierce jealousy and anger that was gnawing at his heart. But the iron colonel had taken a resolution, and he was not to be turned from it by pity.

Slowly, and without any precautions against noise, he locked the door with a loud snap, and put the key in his pocket. Frank stopped whistling, but he did not look round. He only gave a little hitch to his sword-belt, and brought the hilt of his light rapier to the front. Then he resumed his whistle and gradually broke into a low song :

"Le Colonel Clark est brave,
Mais il n'est qu' un esclave,
Sous la main, si douce et suave,
De Mademoiselle Rubie Roland."

Clark heard the mocking words and wondered at the lad's temerity, even while his anger rose to white heat. Frank looked so little and slender, so utterly unable to cope with the powerful and incensed colonel, that such a taunt as his conduct implied made it seem as if he must be crazy.

For the first time the words of Simon Kenton, as to the boy having been sun-struck, recurred to his mind, and for the moment a thrill of pity came to Clark. But as he looked at the boy and noted the quiet bravado of his manner, the supposition became untenable.

"There is too much method for madness, there," thought the border leader.

And, as he came to this conclusion, a stern frown settled on his brow, and he went to the windows. He carefully closed the shutters and locked the French casements so that no one could see in. Then, looking into an inner room, he ascertained that there were no more openings to be guarded.

He closed and locked the door of communication with equal deliberation, then advanced to the table at which Frank sat, and laid his hand heavily on his shoulder.

"Now, sir," said Clark, between his shut teeth, "what is the meaning of this?"

The lad looked up at him with an eye as fierce as his own.

"It means—take your hands off!"

For all answer Clark shook him fiercely, for it seemed as if the threat imbued him with ten-fold rage.

But, to his surprise, after the first fierce look, the boy did not either writhe or struggle, although the nervous gripe of the powerful borderer must have caused intense pain, as the fingers sunk into his shoulder.

Feeling almost ashamed of himself, Clark released his hold, for the first feeling of the soft, delicate shoulder he had gripped had convinced him that Frank was a mere child in his hands. He struck down the boy's feet off the table with his open hand, and then released him, casting himself down in an opposite chair.

"Now, sir," he said, sternly, "since you have learned your manners, tell me what is the meaning of all this?"

The little adjutant was quite silent, but he was breathing hard, and had changed his position. His face was now

turned away from Clark and hidden by the tangled mass of curls. He made no answer.

After a while Clark repeated the question.

"Well, sir, what does this mean? Why have you, whom I have treated like my own son, suddenly found that nothing will do for you but insulting your colonel and exciting mutiny among my troops?"

There was no answer. Still the averted figure looked sulkily away.

"I see you can not answer," said Clark, sternly; "and I honor the shame that leads you to remain silent. It shows me that Governor Henry's nephew has not lost all the instincts of a gentleman. It renders my task less repulsive, for I warn you, John Frank, that the time has come when you must atone for your conduct with your heart's blood—ay, and in this room. Had you shown fear, I should have strangled you ere this, but I can not take advantage of superior strength over a stripling like you. But die you must, and by my hand. Therefore, choose your weapons, and do your best. You shall have every chance."

The boy still kept his head averted, and murmured:

"Why should I die? What have I done?"

"I will tell you, John Frank," said the colonel, in a low, stern voice, with terrible distinctness. "I will tell you, and you at least shall know all before I kill you. A year ago, I met Ruby Roland in Kentucky, and from the moment I saw her I resolved she should be my wife. You may start. I would sooner die than tell her, the proud beauty in her scornful charms, that George Rogers Clark was a slave to her a year since. I would not tell it to you if I had not resolved to kill you, before I leave this room. Well, sir, since you came here—curse your pretty baby-face—I have met *her*, and I have found that she loves *you*; she, the pearl of all beauty and nobility, is fool enough to cast away the treasures of a love, which I would die to possess, on an insolent youngster like you, who values it not, and makes a jest of her name. For these things I am going to kill you, boy, and just so I shall kill every man that comes near Ruby Roland. She may never love me, but, by the eternal heavens, I swear she shall never love another. She may repel my love, but I will con

quer hers. I have sworn to make her adore me. Enough. On this table are two swords and two pistols. Choose which you will, and take first shot."

The averted figure trembled perceptibly.

"I do not want to kill you, colonel," said a low voice.

"Nor can you," said Clark, scornfully. "I was not born to be killed by a boy. Take your shot, and aim well, for if you miss I kill you."

The little adjutant trembled still more.

"I can not fight you, Clark," he whispered.

"But you must," cried the borderer, fiercely. "Do you wish to compel me to murder you? You must die."

The other rose from the chair and sprung behind the table. As he did so, he motioned Clark away, with face averted, as if in great horror.

"Clark, Clark," he panted out, "you know not what you say. I can not fight *you*. If you kill me, you will never see Ruby Roland again."

"I will chance that," said Clark, grimly. "She may grieve for you a while, but bahl she'll not care for a boy like you, when a man loves her. And mark me, boy, she loves me now, although she does not think it. Come, take up the swords. I thought you had more courage, Frank. I see you are only a coward, after all."

The boy dropped his head on his hands so that his long black hair fell all over his face and hid it from view. Then he sunk down on his knees and burst out into a tempest of sobs, while he murmured, brokenly:

"Kill me, then—blind, blind, that will not see the truth. Would I had died long ago!"

For the first time Clark was utterly astounded. He looked at the kneeling figure, shaken with sobs such as no boy ever gave, and as he looked a sudden light broke over his face. He looked at the other with a keen intensity of gaze that, for the first time since he had known his boy adjutant, took in every peculiarity of the slight, feminine grace of that tiny figure. Then, with a sudden exclamation of joy, wonder and doubt together, Colonel Clark rushed forward and clutched eagerly at the form of RUBY ROLAND.

Ay, the moment he felt the soft, yielding flesh under his

hands this time, he wondered that he had never found it out before. His little adjutant, with the pert tongue, and Ruby Roland whom he adored, were one and the same, a warm, living woman, who hid her face under her dark hair in his bosom, and refused to lift it, even for a glimpse of her face, until he forced her up from her knees, with gentle violence.

Then she suddenly flung away from him with all her old impetuosity and caprice, threw back her long black hair with a defiant toss, facing him with glowing face and flaming eyes, and caught up a sword from the table.

"Now, sir, kill me if you dare," she cried. "You were bold enough with Frank. Let me see you face Ruby. Go away. I hate you now!"

Clark laughed carelessly as he advanced.

"You must explain away your masquerade, and a hundred other little things I mind me of, lady-bird, ere you can make me believe that. If you do not love me, what do you here with me, alone, at midnight?"

In a moment she was pale and beseeching.

"Let me go, Clark, and I'll never tease you again."

"Not till you have promised to marry me to-morrow, ere father Gibault departs."

"I promise," she whispered, and he unlocked the door.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

THE month of July had passed and gone, and yet Ruby had not yet kept her promise to Clark. The reason partly was that father Gibault had already gone before the American commandant could inform him of the nature of his discovery, and of the need of his services, partly because Ruby herself begged off with unwonted humility, till father Gibault returned from St. Vincent's.

In the meantime the awakened lovers passed many a pleasant hour together, and explained away many a mystery of

the past. Then first Ruby learned that the apparent coldness with which Clark had treated her at Harrodsburg was put on only to hide the real interest he had felt in her from the first. Then, too, the colonel learned how Ruby's mother was a niece of one of the Henry family, and how she had first obtained the letter which had introduced her under the name of John Frank. He learned also how the interest between them had been mutual, but heightened by pique on the part of Ruby at his supposed indifference. He learned how she had followed him to Kaskaskia, keeping in constant communication with her father's warriors all the way, resolved to succor him if need should be. When she saw what an impression she had produced on him with her beauty in full dress, then it was that for the first time she resolved to try and see if he really loved her. Assisted by her Indian confederates, she had paraded about a dummy figure dressed in the adjutant's uniform, so as to disarm any suspicion that might arise that Ruby and the little officer were one and the same person; and then, after exhibiting herself on several occasions at full speed, along with the dummy figure, on horseback, she dropped the pretense and boldly enacted either character at will.

At last August came in, and with it father Gibault. The old priest had been completely successful in his mission to St. Vincent's. The French inhabitants, heartily sick of their English rulers, no sooner heard the priest's news than they met in a body at their church, took the oath of allegiance to America in the most solemn manner, hoisted the American flag in their empty fort, and elected Helm their commandant. Thus was the last fruit of harvest saved without plucking, and the conquest of Illinois finished.

It was not many days after that Adjutant Frank disappeared to be seen no more. His chief said he had returned to Kentucky but the men were all sorry to miss him. On the same day Captain Joseph Montgomery took Governor Rocheblave a prisoner to Richmond, and all the bells of Kaskaskia rung a joyful peal to celebrate the union of the border leader with his beautiful bride, RUBY ROLAND.

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